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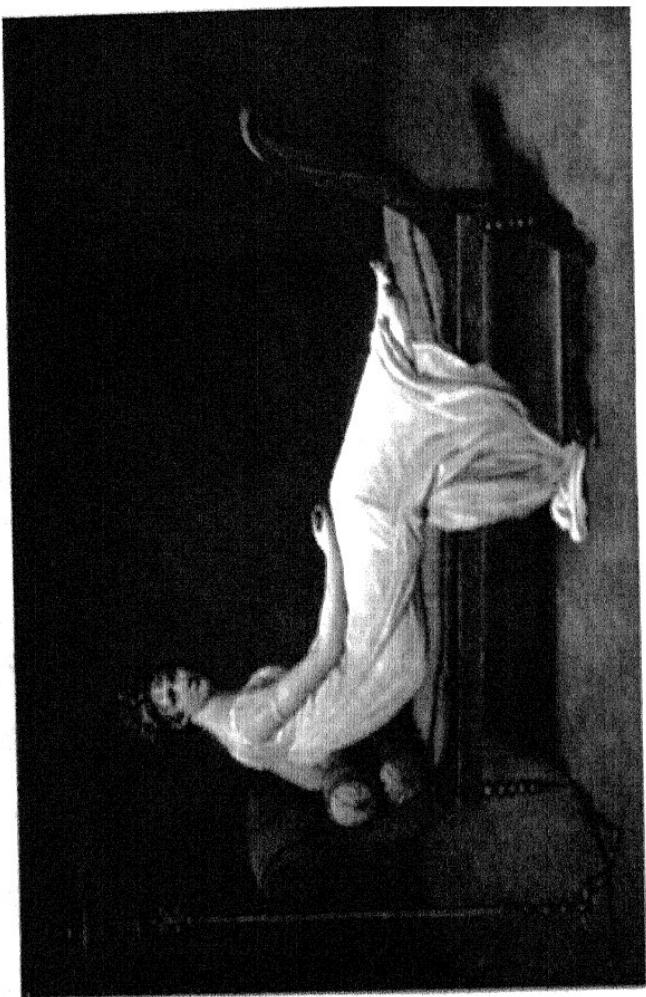
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MADAME RECAMIER

Madame Sommer



MADAME RECAMIER

FROM THE FRENCH OF

EDOUARD HERRIOT

BY

ALYS HALLARD

With Fifteen Portraits in Photogravure

VOL. I

NEW YORK: G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN

1906

RICHARD CLAY AND SONS, LIMITED,
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To the Memory
of
DR. FLEURY-REBATEL.

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“There is no intercourse in the world more delicious than that with a beautiful woman who has the qualities of an honest man.”—(LA BRUYÈRE, *Des Femmes.*)

INTRODUCTION

Should any biography of Mme. Récamier be undertaken?—Mme. Lenormant's publications.—The difficulties of the subject.—Various testimonies.—Documents; Memoirs and Correspondence.—Mme. Récamier's own papers.

In a dainty and delicately handled article devoted to Mme. Récamier, then lately dead, Sainte-Beuve wrote the following lines: “I shall make no attempt here to give her biography, —an ugly word, fit for men only, and which savours of study and research. Women, even when they have nothing particular to conceal, must inevitably lose something of their charm in the course of a continuous description. Can the life of any woman bear relation? It is felt, it passes, we have a glimpse of it. I am very much tempted even to give no date at all—dates in connection with such a subject are anything but elegant.”¹

Sainte-Beuve was repeating, without informing us of the fact, a remark as to chronology ascribed by Mme. Récamier's intimates to Adrien de Montmorency, Duc de Laval,² and indeed the scruples he expresses are merely oratorical preliminaries. A few lines further on, in the course of the same dissertation, he appears to change his mind, and in order to make us understand the “sweet genius” of Mme. Récamier,³ he endeavours to elucidate her story, which is still wrapped in the mists of legend. He even goes to the very extreme he had desired to avoid, for, sceptical as he was

¹ *Causeries du Lundi*. Vol. I, p. 124. The article is dated November 26th, 1849. Madame Récamier herself seems to have wished her life to be written. (*Souvenirs et Correspondance*. Introduction. Vol. I, p. ii.)

² See the *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe*. Biré. Vol. II, p. 278, note 1.

³ P. 125.

a page back, he now becomes more dogmatic than he should be “When we want to judge Mme. de Sévigné or Mme. de Maintenon,” he says, “and understand their nature, some general idea and some *theory*, concerning them, is really indispensable.” He starts forth in quest of his theory and, let us at once add, he atones for the imprudence of his proposition by the exquisite suppleness of his talent, and sketches a portrait of his model which “stirs the dust,” as he was fond of saying himself, so living is it, with every shade and outline, and the very breath of life.

About the same time, J. Lemoinne had asked himself the same question, and answered it in the same sense.¹ “It seems,” he writes, “as though there must always be some hesitation about putting a woman’s name into books, or into anything which is public property, yet one has no right to rob history of this touching figure, as it appears in the midst of the most brilliant cortège of the present century.”²

And indeed the question has already been more or less resolved, for Mme. Lenormant, Mme. Récamier’s niece, published, in 1859, two volumes, bearing the attractive title of “*Souvenirs et Correspondance tirés des papiers de Mme. Récamier*,” which were brilliantly successful. To these she added in 1872, “*Mme. Récamier, les amis de sa jeunesse, et sa correspondance intime*.” Ten years later she published Benjamin Constant’s *Letters* to the same lady. Further, she has intermingled the story of Mme. de Staél’s life with Mme. Récamier’s, in her book on *Coppet et Weimar*.³ The personality of the famous Juliette has therefore, from that time forth, been introduced into the social and literary history of the nineteenth century, and Mme. Lenormant’s works are the first consulted by persons desirous of information concerning Mme. de Staél, Benjamin Constant, and Chateaubriand. So closely is Mme. Récamier’s life interwoven with that of the greatest writers and politicians of the century, that those who desire enlightenment as to their

¹ Article, dated July 1st, 1849, and reproduced in *Étude critique et biographique*. No. XIV.

² P. 362.

³ This appeared in 1862.

individualities, frequently turn to Juliette's biography. For us, then, there is no question of revealing an unknown person, or of pleading the cause of one forgotten, but, since in the first place Mme. Récamier was fortunate enough to live through more than half a century of our history, since an influence which we must recognize even if we do not admire it, caused her to play a part in so many lives and in so many works; since her friendship with Mme. de Staél brought her into close association with the Opposition Party during the first Empire; since Benjamin Constant's love for her is believed to have been the cause of one of the great political apostasies of the nineteenth century; since a philosopher so well worth studying as Ballanche lived solely in and through her for more than thirty years; since the Abbaye-aux-Bois witnessed the elaboration of a great part of the criticisms of Sainte-Beuve and, to conclude, since from 1818 onwards, the whole of Chateaubriand's history is interwoven, as it were, with that of Mme. Récamier, it appeared to us interesting, both from the historical and from the literary point of view, to take up once more the biography of this unique woman, to correct it or complete it by a critical study of the numerous documents in which she is mentioned, and, without exaggerating the merits of a person who shrank from exaggeration, to replace her figure, with patient care, amidst all those political and literary events which a knowledge of her life will enable us to understand or appreciate more thoroughly.

Mme. Lenormant's works have been fiercely attacked. Barbey d'Auréville has been more severe to her than anyone else.¹ It is not that he disapproved of the publication of private letters, as, on the contrary, he calls them "the truth of truth." He complained, though, of the suppression of certain passages, and ridiculed Mme. Lenormant, in a cruel and unjust fashion, as her aunt's "confidential secretary."² He attacked the *salon* in general, with the violence habitual to him in his quarrels with everything that is not *individual*; his article, however, was aimed much more at "*Coppet et Weimar*"

¹ He calls her Le Normand. (*Les Bas-bleus*, p. 12 and following.) The study is exceedingly entertaining, in Barbey's own particular style, most incorrect, dashing, and picturesque.

² P. 17.

than at Mme. Lenormant's greater work.¹ Jules Soury was not much kinder.² Deeply convinced of the importance of the subject treated by Mme. Lenormant, he protested more moderately than Barbey, but more resolutely likewise, against the *eclecticism* of the *Souvenirs et Correspondance*,³ which struck him as being apologetic rather than historical,⁴ a gospel much more than a biography.⁵ "There can be no doubt but that a religion did exist," he writes, "with sects, heresies, and crowds of adorers, whereof the Great Goddess was Mme. Récamier; Mme. Lenormant is the last remaining priestess of this faith!"⁶ These criticisms, many more of which might be quoted,⁷ are evidently exaggerated.

Mme. Lenormant protests that her book on Mme. Récamier is "thoroughly sincere,"⁸ or rather she draws a distinction, declaring that, as regards her aunt, she has "suppressed nothing, softened nothing," whereas, with regard to her friends, she has put forward "everything that might recommend them." Mme. Lenormant deserves credit for a certain courage: she recognizes the fact that the charming Juliette's love of pleasing others may have been the cause of certain deep wounds:⁹ she does not deny that there was for a time "a cruel misunderstanding" between her and Chateaubriand.¹⁰ Concerning the gravest crisis of Mme. Récamier's existence, she gives us very precise information, and she speaks as freely as it is possible for her to speak as to the interpretation of the famous case. Mme. Lenormant had made it a rule not to publish letters from persons still living at the moment when her *Souvenirs* appeared, that is, in the year 1859.¹¹ There are therefore certain gaps. We believe that the shortcomings of her works have not escaped us, and if we have not used her books as our model, we have been constantly guided and informed by them.

¹ His attacks were no less fierce in his study of *Mme. de Staél* in the same volume.

² *Portraits de Femmes*, p. 302, and following.

³ P. 305.

⁴ P. 314.

⁵ P. 315.

⁶ P. 316.

⁷ See the article by Clément de Ris in the *Bulletin du Bibliophile et du Bibliothécaire*, 1860, p. 1193 and following, or even Guizot's, in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, December 1st, 1859.

⁸ *Introduction*, p. xi.

⁹ *Introduction*, p. xiv.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. xxiii.

¹¹ *Souv. et Corr.* II, pp. 192-193.

The enterprise we have undertaken presented certain difficulties which we have no desire to exaggerate, but the recognition of which may perhaps excuse, to some extent, the weak points of our work. When Ballanche himself was beginning, in the year 1823, that as yet unpublished biography of Mme. Récamier, from which our readers will have the good fortune to read more than one quotation in the course of this work, he wrote, with that charm so peculiarly his own : “ All that purity and delicacy which must inspire the mind of any man when speaking of a woman who never willingly went beyond the private circle within which, it is impossible to doubt, she would fain have hidden herself always, imposes on me a reserve, and I may venture to say, a modesty, which words, even the most restrained, must always betray a little. I shall be like the historian of a mystery, like those philosophers whose veiled doctrine was intended not for all men, but only for a few. I shall try to speak of Mme. Récamier without becoming the accomplice of that renown which overtook her unawares.”¹ John Lemoinne, in his turn, felt the great difficulty of clear definitions in connection with such a subject. “ This figure,” he writes, “ is not easy to reproduce either in painting or in writing : music offers, it may be, the only means of rendering a thing so vague and undetermined.”² For such a subject, documents are not everything. Even when they are sincere, they leave something to the imagination. A letter appears to be that of a coquette, but do we not feel in it the vexation, or some other emotion, kept down by force of will ? The domain of history must be constantly abandoned for a time without wandering into that of romance. We must neither be over simple nor over sceptical ; we feel we must accept certain obscurities, some contradictions, there must be no breaking down of closed doors, no pedantic explanations of situations in which the persons most interested have not recognized their own positions. Unlike the young man whom Bossuet describes, the action of women is almost always complex. And no woman ever lived a life less simple than that of Mme. Récamier. For such stories as these we need a Mme. de La Fayette, a Marivaux, a Sainte-Beuve, or

¹ *Biogr. inéd.*, by Ballanche, p. 2.

² *Journal des Débats*, October 27, 1859.

the man, still nearer to us, who in so fascinating a way traced the pleasing story of the Marquise de Sévigné.

Yet another difficulty complicated our task. "Mme. Récamier," says Ballanche again, "lived much more in her friends than in herself.¹ Therefore, to write her friends' lives would be to write her own: to paint those to whom she was so truly and so faithfully attached would be to paint herself. The worship of talent was one of her characteristics. Distinguished persons had a claim on her sympathy, and were destined to feel her charm and even to receive her affection, and this it is which, in spite of herself, and of all her care to remain outside the boundaries of history, makes her a historic personage." We must make allowance for the grandiloquence or for the friendship, but the truth of the observation still remains. Mme. Récamier did nothing very remarkable or important herself. The letters she wrote are much less numerous and much less interesting than those written to her. Her story is the little thread which binds many other stories together. In order to speak of her in a fashion worthy of attention we must call in Mme. de Staël, or Benjamin Constant, or Chateaubriand. The result is that the interest, apparently at least, is then dispersed and weakened. It is on account of our consciousness of this drawback that we have entitled this work *Madame Récamier and her friends*.

At all events, we have done our best in our researches to conform to the rules of a good historical method. Mme. Récamier only died in 1849; we have therefore been able to consult witnesses who were personally acquainted with her. We have had the privilege of questioning Mme. Cathinka Mackenzie de Dietz, the celebrated pianist to Queen Marie-Amélie, who, having been brought up at the Abbaye-aux-Bois somewhere about the year 1835, had the opportunity of being present frequently at Juliette's entertainments, and met there Chateaubriand, Montmorency and the elegant Sosthènes de la Rochefoucauld. Mme. Récamier sometimes lent her drawing room to Madame Mackenzie, then Mlle. de Dietz, for musical gatherings, at which she was assisted by La

¹ *Biogr. inéd.*, pp. 2 and 3.

Rivière, the harpist. Though she was born in 1815, Mme. Mackenzie, when we saw her, recollected numbers of anecdotes of all kinds connected with the Abbaye. She remembered Mme. Récamier as a kindly person with light chestnut hair, slightly arched nostrils, thin lips, and full eyes that had lost their colour. Her teeth were not in good condition; Juliette did not talk much, and walked in her garden every afternoon wearing a large shepherdess hat.

Monsieur E. Delphin, of Lyons, Mme. Récamier's nephew, was kind enough to write out his recollections and send them to us. Between the years 1843 and 1847, he had seen all the men who most assiduously frequented the Abbaye; his conversation, his letters, and his papers have been of use to us more than once, and his judicious criticisms have assisted us in completing or discussing the documents he discovered himself and those which he allowed us to lay before him.

These documents were numerous, and we had to make a selection. The superiority, for studies such as ours, of epistolary sources over memoirs, the assertions contained in which must only be accepted with the greatest caution, can no longer be denied.¹ In the *Avertissement* of his *Histoire politique de la Révolution française*, Monsieur Aulard has sharply but soundly criticized sources of this nature.² Memoirs, only too evidently, are private apologies in which memory gets "deformed," and this is the right word. The eminent historian lays down the following rule:—*If the testimony is to be believed it must not only emanate from a contemporary witness, it must have been given at the very moment when the event to which it refers took place, or very shortly afterwards, while the memory was still in the plenitude of its power.* Letters, therefore, are to be preferred to memoirs. Many of these will be found in the present work. In spite of the risk of being lengthy, whenever we have come across a letter likely to throw light on a person or a fact, we have preferred, instead of making any comment, to give the hitherto unpublished text on which

¹ See Madelin, *Fouché*. Vol. I, p. xxviii, with a critical list of the Memoirs used by him.

² P. xi. Compare M. A. Sorel's remarkable pages, *Histoire et Mémoires. Minerva*, January 15, 1903, p. 166 and following.)

we had chanced, and we have contented ourselves, as Sainte-Beuve puts it, with "the rôle of picture framer."¹

Even *Letters* are not quite above suspicion. Sainte-Beuve, who has made so much use of them, has also criticized them. "Generally speaking," he says, "letters must only be relied on to a certain extent, for the writer always models himself, in some respects, on the person to whom he is writing. Every intelligent man, whose mind is trained and versatile, when he takes up his pen to write a letter, is a little like Alcibiades, and considers more or less the tastes of the person to whom he is addressing himself. What must it be, then, when affection is at stake and one wishes to please?"² Subject to this reservation, letters certainly are the most valuable authority of all. It is in her letters that Mme. de Staél reveals herself in all her eagerness, her passion, her love of life and knowledge, in the sincerity of her instability. And who can flatter himself on knowing Chateaubriand, unless he has read a part, at least, of that correspondence which it is to be hoped will be collected and published some day. Such a work would permit us to determine the features of a character so diversely estimated at the present time.

The publication of letters offered an interest of two different kinds. A certain number had already appeared, but those who had published had also, in some cases, corrected them, and it was therefore necessary to attempt, in due proportion, what the Monmerqué Edition has done for the Letters of Mme. de Sévigné. Our readers are no doubt acquainted with the truly cynical remark of the younger M. de Staél, in his edition of his mother's diary: "I scarcely found even a few trifling corrections to make in the style." About the year 1850, the fashion in which unpublished texts were sent forth was deplorable. Cousin, in his study of Santa-Rosa, which appeared in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* of 1st March, 1840, mutilated the texts he quoted, put two or three letters into one, altered dates, suppressed important passages, or

¹ *Corr.* Vol. II, p. 255.

² (*Portraits cont.* V, p. 288). Calmann-Lévy, 1889.

inserted them out of their proper places. It would be hardly just to reproach Mme. Lenormant with having followed so illustrious an example to a moderate extent. “The art of exact quotation is a thing which only dates from yesterday, or rather it then became an integral part and an essential condition of honesty in literary matters.”¹ More than once, then, we have had to reconstitute an already published text, and restore it to its original form.

But as a general rule the letters introduced into this work have not been published hitherto. In obedience to the advice lately addressed to editors of memoirs by M. Albert Sorel,² we have indicated the gaps by dots whenever we have found it necessary to cut anything out of the text.

We must mention to whom we are indebted for having been enabled, during the course of our labours, to keep the promise indicated by the title of our book, and to enrich the history of literature by the addition of fresh documents. Until now, Mme. Récamier’s papers had never been thoroughly examined. M. Charles de Loménie, who received them from the hands of Mme. Lenormant, might very well have kept them back, to publish them himself at some later date. For several years he has allowed us to ransack his archives, humouuring all our indiscretions, permitting us to discuss the most delicate subjects, and placing no restraint on our freedom, save that which his scruples imposed on himself. He it was who prepared the sheaf, which we have only had to bind together.

We do not over-estimate the importance of our undertaking. Charles Monselet goes too far when he calls the Abbaye-aux-Bois a Versailles, and asserts that “this coterie will hold as important a place in the artistic history of France as that of the Port-Royal in religious history.”³ John Lemoinne, if we may be permitted to quote him once more, says, with greater

¹ L. Belmont, in the *Revue d’Hist. litt. de la France*, October—December, 1902, p. 655 and note 2. Louis de Loménie’s *Beaumarchais*, which appeared in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* in 1853 and 1854, is one of the first works in which this literary honesty makes itself apparent.

² *Minerva*, Jan. 15, 1903.

³ *Portraits après décès*, pp. 138, 139.

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justice, “Beauty, like genius, like success, like crime, has its kingdom. Mme. Récamier reigned : she reigned by her grace, and she had a nation of subjects. Her life was intermingled with the lives of the greatest, the most famous, the most important people of her time. *With her biography, history may be written!*”¹ It is precisely this which we have endeavoured to do.

¹ *Débats*, November 24, 1850.

MADAME RECAMIER AND HER FRIENDS

CHAPTER I

YOUTH AND MARRIAGE

DECEMBER 3, 1777,—OCTOBER 26, 1795

Julie Bernard's baptismal certificate.—Her mother's beauty.—M. Bernard appointed *Receveur des finances* in Paris.—Juliette at Villefranche, and at the Convent of the Déserte.—Characteristics of the citizens of Lyons.—Juliette in Paris.—Mme. Bernard's *salon*, Lemontey, Barère, La Harpe.—Jacques-Rose Récamier; he marries Juliette.—What are we to think of this marriage?—M. Récamier's explanations.—The marriage certificate.—Mme. Lenormant's assertions.—Juliette's case.—Mérimée's remarks.—Was it, physiologically speaking, an exceptional case?

THE baptismal register of the Parish of St. Pierre and St. Saturnin at Lyons, now in the Municipal Archives of the city, contains the following entry: “Jeanne Françoise Jullie Adélaïde, the legitimate daughter of Me. Jean Bernard, King's Councillor and Notary of Lyons, and of Dlle. Marie Julie Mattton, born yesterday in the Rue La Cage, was baptized by me the undersigned, priest, on the fourth of December, 1777. The godfather was Sieur François Fargues, burgess of this town. and the godmother Dlle. Jeanne Bernard, the child's aunt, who signed with the father.”¹ Thus it was on the 3rd of December, as Sainte-Beuve tells us,² and not on the 4th (as Mme. Lenormant wrongly believed),³ that, “in one of the most modest houses” of a street that was “dark and narrow in those days,” the future Mme. Récamier first saw the light.⁴ It will be noticed that the name of Juliette, under which she was to become celebrated all over Europe, was not conferred upon her by her baptismal certificate.⁵ It was custom which

¹ Here follow the signatures.

² *Causeries du Lundi.* I, p. 124.

³ *Souv. et Corr.* I, p. 1.

⁴ Monfalcon, *Hist. de Lyon.* IV, p. 121.

⁵ Sainte-Beuve, *Causeries du Lundi.* I, p. 124.

assigned to her this pleasing appellation so suitable to her grace. Her fellow townsman, Pierre-Simon Ballanche, was a year older than she was. In that same month, December 1777, and in that same town, Julie Carron, who was to be the only love of André-Marie Ampère, came into the world.¹

The name of Maître Jean Bernard, of the "Rue de La Cage, successor to Maîtres Patrin, Louis Chazotte, Romieux, father and son, and Jallabert," appears in the *Almanach de Lyon* for the first time in 1776. The city then boasted forty notaries, "with reserved and established rights, similar to those of the notaries of the city of Paris." This particular notary, according to witnesses who knew him well, was a man of "moderate intelligence, gentle and rather weak in character," but of an extremely handsome, regular and noble countenance.² Local historians add that he was "highly respected."³

Julie Matton, Mme. Bernard, was a person of a more accentuated type: her influence on her daughter is more definite and more easy to determine. She was a fair woman, fresh looking and lively. "She was admirably proportioned, and set the highest value on external charms both for herself and for her daughter."⁴ We must note this trait, namely, that Mme. Bernard, who, till her dying day, was careful of her own beauty, bequeathed to her little Juliette the idea of feeling that it is a woman's duty to think of her personal charms. This inclination appears to have been allied, in the case of the mother of the future Mme. Récamier, with a strong common-sense and a constant eye to business matters.⁵ There was nothing giddy or over-capricious about these two women, who were both of them pretty and well aware of the fact. Constantly, or almost constantly, they remained mistresses of their own actions: a prudent reserve attended them even in their moments of weakness, which never reached the point of folly.⁶

¹ *Corr. des Ampère.* I, p. 191. The Duchesse de Duras was born at Brest on March the 22nd, 1777. See her biography by Bardoux, p. 45.

² *Souv. et Corr.* I, p. 1.

³ *Monfalcon.* IV, p. 121.

⁴ *Souv. et Corr.* I, p. 1.

⁵ *Souv. et Corr.* I, p. 2.

⁶ M. Itier (of the Château de Veras, Veynes, Hautes-Alpes) possesses a miniature representing Mme. Bernard, but this painting is believed to be a fancy portrait, painted long after death.

The question is how did it come about that, in the year 1784, the wily de Calonne appointed M. Bernard *Receveur des Finances* in Paris? Mme. Lenormant did not know,¹ and we are no better informed.²

Certain it is that Juliette was left at Villefranche, under the care of one of Julie Matton's sisters. Here it was that she grew attached to her young cousin Mlle. Blachette, whom we shall meet later on under the name of the Baronne de Dalmassy.³ She only remained there a few months, and was then sent as a boarder to the Convent of la Déserte at Lyons.

The Royal Abbey of la Déserte had been founded in 1269, for the nuns of the Order of Sainte Claire, by Blanche de Châlons, wife of Guichard de Beaujeu, Constable of France. "The spot on which they have settled," says the *Almanach de la Ville de Lyon* for the year 1789⁴ "was formerly called *de deserta*. Hence the name of the Monastery. In 1503, by a Bull published by Julius II, the nuns passed under Benedictine rule. At the present day the community numbers forty persons, and boarders are received."⁵

At la Déserte, Juliette found another of her mother's sisters, who had taken the veil.⁶ She always had a pleasant memory

¹ *Souv. et Corr.* I., p. 2.

² Etienne Delécluze, in that portion of his *Souvenirs* published in the *Revue rétrospective*, 1888, IX, 2, ascribes some rather strange remarks concerning Mme. Bernard to a certain M. de Pomaret. According to this story, M. Bernard, who had been "in business" at Lyons, had been unfortunate, and had even been threatened with imprisonment; but, warned by a man of the name of Baron, he sent his wife to Paris, and she, thanks to her beauty, got the matter settled. Mme. Bernard, according to M. de Pomaret, was exceedingly pretty, but of a somewhat shady reputation, and rather bad-tempered. She brought up her daughter with the intention of "making her play some great part," and "thanks to her ascendancy" over M. Récamier, induced him to marry the young girl (p. 16).—In an unpublished fragment of a letter from Camille Jordan, part of which has appeared (*Mme. R. et les amis de sa jeunesse*, p. 45), we find this somewhat mysterious passage, "for it is wonderful to see, in these few days, and without appearing to lift a finger, what numbers of hearts you have added to so many that you had already won, from the pious sisters who had well-nigh forgiven their priest the weakness which had made him fail in his duty in order to have such a child as yourself, to the dissipated Milady, who would almost have forsaken her lover for the sake of such a friend." (Charles de Loménie's MSS.)

³ *Souv. et Corr.* I., p. 2. See the anecdote of Renaud Humblot.

⁴ P. 45.

⁵ The Abbey of La Déserte has now completely disappeared.

⁶ *Souv. et Corr.* I., p. 1.

of the time she spent there, so much so that she herself wrote, in connection with the opening years of her life, a page, full of charm, which has fortunately been preserved.

"That period," she says, "comes back to me sometimes, like a vague sweet dream, with its clouds of incense, its perpetual ceremonies, the procession through the gardens, the chanting and the flowers."¹ Mme. Récamier, whose religious beliefs were never uncompromising and who, as she tells us herself, only accepted beliefs in so far as they seemed to her admissible,² ascribed the firmness of her Catholic convictions, in the midst of all her other changes, to the deep influence of the convent. Benjamin Constant, who wrote some fragments which have been preserved about Juliette's youth,³ has added a few details to those recollections of her own. He shows us the young girl among her comrades. "Slight and light of foot, she outstripped them in the race : she used to cover with a bandage those eyes which were one day to reach the depths of every soul. The beautiful hair which she could not let down now, without filling our hearts with tumult, fell harmlessly then over her white shoulders."⁴ Chateaubriand, who was acquainted with these recollections of Constant's and made use of them, defines and describes it all better still. He went to Lyons to see the *Jardin des Plantes*, which had been established in the former Convent gardens : he desired to look with his own eyes on the landscape on which those of Juliette had rested : he called up the memory of the young girl, shut up behind the convent grating, a grating that never opened on the church except when the Host was elevated during Mass. "The Mother-Superior's birthday was the chief festival of the whole community ;⁵ the prettiest of the school-girls recited the usual complimentary phrases : she was dressed, her locks braided, and her head veiled and crowned by her companions' hands. All this went on in silence, for the hour at which they rose was one of those known in religious houses as the hour of 'great silence.' Naturally all the honours of the day fell to Juliette."

¹ *Souv. et Corr.* I, p. 2.

² *Ibid.*, p. 2.

³ Published at the close of *Lettres de B. C. à Mme. R.*

⁴ P. 338.

⁵ *Mémoires d'Outre Tombe*, v. IV, p. 375.

The pupils seem to have spent a very pleasant life within their cloister walls ; they were few in number, and all of wealthy families ; they were prepared for their social life, their natural gifts were cultivated, care was taken of their beauty or of their voices. "Inward devotion and an indulgent toleration," this, according to one biographer, was the rule of the house.¹ In these charming surroundings Juliette's young soul woke to life, and tasted the delights of her earliest successes. "An artist had given her features to the angel that smiled down from above the tabernacle ; her pure and expressive voice, the compass of which was at that time remarkable,² sent a thrill through the whole church, when the doors of the sanctuary were opened for the Elevation, and the public, banished to the far side of the grating, beheld, behind the veil thus raised, a bevy of exquisite young girls, all at their prayers. She was happy and, thanks to her calm and loving nature, so clinging and steadfast that she looked out on life indolently, as in a dream, and without a touch of impatient desire."³

M. Bernard had carried off with him to Paris, his friend Simonard, who was at the same time a fierce Voltairian and a Royalist, and he now completed the home circle in which Juliette was summoned to take her place during the closing years of the *ancien régime*.⁴

One cannot help wondering whether at this moment, when the young school-girl from the Convent of la Déserte came home to her parents' house, No. 13, Rue des Saint-Pères, in Paris,⁵ her temperament was already formed and marked by the peculiarities of her Lyons origin. "By birth a native of Lyons," says Auguste Barbier,⁶ "there was nothing of the Allobrogian type about her. In her the Parisian germ had burst forth under the skies and within the walls of the ancient Gallic city." It is not easy to understand what Barbier meant by his "Allobrogian type," and to us his definition is by no means satisfactory. The question we here set ourselves is

¹ Ant. Rondelet, *Éloge de Mme. Récamier*, p. 99.

² But Mme. Lenormant says, "The compass of her voice was very limited."—*Souv. et Corr.* I, p. 7.

³ Rondelet, p. 99.

⁴ *Souv. et Corr.*, p. 2, and following.

⁵ *Ibid.* I, p. 6.

⁶ *Souvenirs personnels*, p. 308.

somewhat delicate, and its solution affects the interpretation, by no means an easy one, of the future Mme. Récamier's character. Juliette was born two and a half centuries later in the native city of that "Belle Cordière" so extolled by the poets. In the sixteenth century, the house of Louise Labbé had been, after a fashion, the Abbaye-aux-Bois of the town of Lyons, but with an atmosphere that had more warmth and less tranquillity. What was there in Mme. Récamier and in Louise Labbé, too, that was inherent in their race and peculiar to their place of origin?¹

Renan, among several others, prided himself on having analysed the distinctive features of the Lyonese woman. He notices her charm, "that of a sort of delicate decency and voluptuous chastity, her seductive reserve implying the unspoken idea that beauty is a holy thing,"² the strange facility with which she allows herself to be led away by apparent mysticism and piety."³ *Delicate decency, voluptuous chastity, seductive reserve*,—these expressions may not apply to the Lyons woman of every period, but they seem to have been made for explaining the character which, in Juliette Bernard's case, was to grow more and more clearly defined. Renan is less judicious when, speaking again of the Lyonese women, he alludes to their "mystic and passionate disposition," their "somewhat materialistic piety, their taste for what is out of the common and for what is emotional."⁴ This time the portrait is overdrawn, and Mme. Récamier can no longer be recognized in it.

Yet in the depths of her being she bore and was always to retain the stamp of her Lyons origin, and this was destined to be strengthened by the intercourse she always kept up with her family circle, and still more by her intimacy with celebrated citizens of that town, all of them strongly marked specimens of the local type, such as Ballanche, Gérando, and Camille Jordan. Mme. Récamier's fellow-citizens are fond of com-

¹ Sainte-Beuve, *Portraits contemporains*. V, p. 35.—Mlle. de Lespinasse, too, was born at Lyons in 1731 or 1732.

² He refers us to Lamartine, *Girondins*, xl ix, 13.

³ *L'Église chrétienne* p. 477.

⁴ *Marc Aurèle*, p. 294.

plaining, and not without reason,¹ that the type they represent has not yet been defined, like the Norman type or that of Marseilles, in literature; they protest against Lamartine's judgment, jeer at Sainte-Beuve and the theories concerning the women of Lyons put forward by him in his *Portraits Contemporains*; they do not take Emile Montégut's descriptions seriously, much less those of Stendhal. Most of them refuse to recognize any likeness to themselves, except in a speech by Quinet, which Mme. Récamier herself may have read, for it was delivered on the 10th of April, 1839, and also in that famous passage in which Michelet speaks of "Lyons, in the mighty opposition between her two mountains, the mystic mountain and the mountain which works: Fourvières and the Croix-Rousse."²

We cannot enter here into a discussion as to the legitimacy of this interpretation of the Lyone character in general as a mixture of mysticism and practical activity. Yet some notions drawn from it may tend to the explanation of the character of Mme. Récamier. It must be acknowledged that we run the risk of misunderstanding this celebrated woman if we isolate her too much from her native origin.³

She unites in herself these contrasts which occasionally cast a veil of obscurity over the Lyone character. We must never expect to find in her that unity of moral or intellectual development which renders certain southern types of character more simple. We shall frequently find her melancholy: this is a racial feature. We shall sometimes find fault with an appearance of coldness which disconcerts her friends,

¹ See "Lyon en 1889," by Ed. Aynard (printed at Lyons by Mougin-Rusand.)

²,³ Aynard, as quoted above, p. 8. "Hills" would possibly have sufficed instead of "mountains." See E. Faguet's *Etude sur Ballanche*. (Pol. et Mor., 11.)

³ "The Lyone interests himself in things directly opposed to each other, and that is why he appears enigmatic." (Aynard, as quoted above.) The testimony of A. Daudet, although drawn from a novel, is none the less worthy of remembrance. Speaking of a Lyone woman, he says: "She was born at the Brotteaux, facing the great Rhone, whose waters, lively and joyous when running into Arles or Avignon, to the merry sound of bells and grasshoppers, take their dull colour from the mists, the heavy rain-streaked skies of Lyons, without losing one whit of their own violence, and are a faithful reflection of that race, at once fiery and frigid, with its strong will and its melancholy enthusiasms."—*L'Evangeliste*. Chap. V.

and makes her appear more of a coquette than she really is—a racial feature again. We shall see her dreaming, in the very midst of action, or, again, acting but as though in a dream. After such uncertain sallies, which are never of long duration, she will invariably return of her own free will to reason, that smiling, resigned reason which was the mainstay of her whole life. She was profoundly charitable, another feature which betrayed her origin. And, in conclusion, we must add that, like the city of her birth, she possessed a strong sentiment of personal freedom, a proud dignity, which kept her from giving herself a loose rein. “Lyons,” says one of its historians proudly, “has never been owned by any lord.”¹ Mme. Récamier might possibly have said of herself what has been written of the city of her birth.

We must judge of this later on. At the time of which we write, the fair Juliette Bernard was finishing her education, working at her music, learning the harp, the piano, and taking singing-lessons.² Her mother taught her the difficult art of dress, took her to the theatre, or into society. Juliette saw one of the last of the grand dinners of Versailles, was noticed by the Queen, and even “measured,” we are told, against Madame Royale.³

The life led by M. and Mme. Bernard seems to have been almost a life of luxury; their favourite guests were citizens of Lyons who had either settled in Paris or were passing through. Their special preference was for literary people. Thus Juliette, when still a child, knew her fellow townsman, Edouard Lemontey. He was young at that time, and looking about for a career. He was a member of the Legislative Assembly, and a moderate constitutional in politics, and had not as yet made himself remarkable by his readiness to serve every régime. Barère de Vieuzac, a man of very different origin, was also a frequent guest at Mme. Bernard’s house and, as has been truly remarked,⁴ his protection explains the fact that Juliette’s family traversed the most difficult periods of the Revolution with comparative ease. Barère, who was a

¹ Aynard, work quoted, p. 11.

² *Souv. et Corr.* I, p. 7. It was not till a later date that she took lessons from Boieldieu, who was about the same age as herself.

³ *Souv. et Corr.* I, pp. 8, 9.

⁴ *Souv. et Corr.* I, p. 10.



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member of the Convention, and President of that assembly, a member, too, of the Committee of Public Safety, cannot have failed to render service to his friends in the Rue des Saints-Pères.¹ In this same circle Juliette first met La Harpe, the critic. He was already advanced in life, and was devoting his whole attention to his lectures at the Lycée. Juliette was probably taken to hear the lessons of the man she was to see cast into prison as a suspect in 1794. La Harpe, whom we shall meet again, was one of Mme. Récamier's earliest adorers. In a letter still in existence, he says, after accepting an invitation : "For all time, and in every place, my heart belongs to the charming Juliette."²

Finally, and above all, it was at her mother's house that Juliette received the first attentions paid her by the man who was to become her husband, Jacques-Rose Récamier. He was a banker whose magnificent style of living was famous all over Paris. He was born at Lyons in 1751, and the baptismal register of the parish of Saint-Nizier contains the following entry³ :—"On March 10th, 1751, I baptized Jacques-Rose, born on the previous day, the son of Sieur François Récamier, merchant, and of Demoiselle Emerode (*sic*) Delaroche, his wife." His kinsman, Brillat-Savarin, jurisconsult and gastronomist, had frequented the society of the Récamier family at Lyons, he had even spent some time under Monsieur Récamier's roof, and in one of his still unpublished tales, *La Culotte Rouge*,⁴ he draws a somewhat curious portrait of the elder Récamier, Jacques' father, and of his three sons, Jacques, Laurent, and Nicolas. The financier's father made a special impression on him. "This worthy man," he writes, "was very fond of me; he was severe, like most fathers of his period, and my affection for him was mingled with respect and fear." As to the sons :—"Nicolas was younger than Laurent, and older than Jacques, whom all Paris knows. He

¹ Barère, "who was very fond of literature, and more especially of sentimental literature," collaborated in the publication of the *Letters of Mlle. de Lespinasse* in 1809. (Sainte-Beuve, *Courseries du Lundi*. II., p. 122.)

² C. L. A. R. No. 70.

³ Municipal Archives of Lyons. No. 98.

⁴ About these stories see Lucien Tendret, *La Table au pays de Brillat-Savarin*, Belley, 1892, p. 127. We are indebted to Dr. Brillat-Savarin for the fragments we publish.

had the least business capacity of the three, looked after the rough material of the factory, and settled the workmen's accounts.”¹

François Recamier, who was to become Juliette's father-in-law, was, as a matter of fact, at the head of a great hat-making business at Lyons.² Jacques-Rose, who had begun life in the same trade, and had consequently travelled much in Spain, which country was destined to become the principal field of his own business undertakings, was a well-educated man. “His commercial correspondence,” so Mme. Lenormant tells us, “was looked on as a model of its kind,” and this we readily believe.³ We have, for instance, a letter from him dated March 6th, 1811,⁴ in which he makes a vigorous complaint to the Ministry of “the small amount of importance the post office seems to attach to the delivery of foreign letters, or those coming from countries with which we are at war.” Just at this moment the Emperor had forbidden all correspondence with England, and letters from that country were not delivered at all. Jacques-Rose Récamier's epistle is very courteous, but exceedingly firm. “I beseech you, Monseigneur,” he says at the end of it, “to be good enough to grant my request. I have a horror of anything resembling disregard of the law; nobody is more anxious than I to submit myself to the intentions of the Government, and even to second them, so far as my feeble powers permit. But I flatter myself that your Excellency, recognizing the truth of my remarks, will condescend to treat them with the consideration I claim from your Excellency's kindness.”⁵

Some of the historians of the Napoleonic period were very severe on Jacques Récamier. One of them speaks of him as “an unprincipled jobber” who used his wife as an “advertisement.” “The Revolution served him well,” writes M.

¹ At a later period Laurent was told off to attend his sister-in-law when she went to the opera balls.—*Souv. et Corr.* I, p. 83.

² *Souv. et Corr.* I, p. 10.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁴ National Archives, F⁷ 6571 (2848) No. 3.

⁵ In the Bibliothèque of the Arsenal there is a letter signed J.-R. Récamier, 6359 (339 *ter*, H. F.). It is a business communication, addressed on the 22nd of Frimaire, year II, by the bankers of the Public Treasury to the Receiver-General of the Sarre. There is another, No. 7055. (See Catalogue, Vol. 6, p. 373.)

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Frédéric Masson, "Thanks to it, he netted a fortune, real or apparent; but, when rich, and desiring to open his house, he laid claim to having something more attractive than concerts, balls and parties; he had his wife. Unlike Mme. Angot, nothing could be too rich, too elegant, or too expensive for her."¹

It was inevitable, indeed, that Jacques Récamier's reasons for marrying Juliette Bernard should have received various interpretations. Documentary testimony on this point is far more valuable than mere comment, and no more curious document can be quoted than the letter written by Récamier to his kinsman Delphin, at Lyons, just after his proposal for Juliette's hand had been accepted :

“PARIS, February 22nd, 1793.²

“Last year, my dear friend, I hinted to you that the thought of marriage was beginning to have more charm for me. The idea was still a vague one, uncertain as to choice, and devoid of any fixed determination. I had nevertheless already found my conqueror, though I was as yet unaware of the power of her weapons, and never reckoned on my own defeat. To ensure your receiving this confession without that feeling of prejudice with which the surrounding circumstances might perhaps inspire you, I must begin by drawing you a portrait of the person, not as blind love might present her, but such as a clear-sighted friendship and the most tender affection have enabled me to judge her, with all the calmness of reason and the discernment of a sensible man. Unfortunately, she is too young, she is not more than sixteen. Others may possess greater beauty, but I have never seen any which answered better to my heart's desire. In her, candour, modesty, sweetness, are accompanied by all the charms of youth. In spite of the disproportion between our ages, as I have always treated her with affectionate tenderness, she has always shown me a special regard, which has been developed

¹ *Figaro Illustré*, March, 1893, p. 54.

² We have corrected the spelling and punctuation; the variations of the original present no feature of interest.

by her childish caresses and her own innocent ardour, though veiled by the timid reserve of a tender heart just beginning to be stirred. I have noted all these gradations ; they have strengthened my own feelings. I am not in love with her, but I feel for her a genuine and tender attachment which convinces me that this interesting creature will be a partner who will ensure the happiness of my whole life and, judging by my own desire to ensure her happiness, of which I can see she is absolutely convinced, I have no doubt that the benefit will be reciprocal. Her education has been very carefully looked after, more in the way of solid knowledge than mere accomplishments, though these have been by no means neglected. She could hardly have been born under a more lucky star. She possesses germs of virtue and principle such as are seldom seen so highly developed at so early an age ; she is tender-hearted, affectionate, charitable and kind, beloved in her home-circle and by all who know her.

"Agreeable as this portrait may seem, I believe, without too much self-deception, that it is by no means exaggerated, and it will readily account for my feelings. It was only after long and thorough study of its nature and sincerity that I made up my mind to reveal them, at a moment when her parents were the last persons to have expected this, for I had never conducted myself in their house in a way likely to rouse any suspicion of my views, of which no one had any idea, neither the young lady herself nor any of those about her. There had even been two other suitors, about whom I had been consulted. It was after this that I made my own proposal, first of all to the mother, and afterwards to the father. Both of them, who know me well, appeared delighted. But above all, it was necessary to find out the intentions of the person chiefly concerned ; it might very well have been that, while having the highest esteem for me as a friend, she would not care for me as a husband ; she seemed enchanted with my proposal ; she was affected to tears on learning that it was inspired by a feeling of affection ; she confessed that she shared this feeling with her whole heart, and she conveyed the same idea to me during the interview which followed my proposal. This took place on Saturday, and I have seen her again since.

Words fail to express what we feel for each other. Our tears supply what is lacking. Have you already guessed, dear friend, who might be the charming creature whose name I must end by telling you? It is Mlle. Bernard. Hearing this name, prejudice might perhaps weaken the interest with which my picture of her, physical and moral, may have inspired you. But believe me, my dear friend, I have enough good sense to have weighed everything carefully. Whether I should take the young lady with her father and mother or without them, I do not think public opinion can reproach me, and it will soon be dumb and disarmed when my choice has been justified by a knowledge of and an acquaintance with her excellent qualities. It may be said that my feelings for the daughter arise out of those I have had for her mother; but all those who frequent the house are well aware that what took me there was pure friendship—a friendship which had grown out of the possibly somewhat warmer feeling I may have had in the earlier days of our acquaintance. At present, having reached an age when all other pretensions are past, she only wishes to educate her child, and make her a virtuous and good woman. The varying circumstances of her life have taught her, better than most women, the value, at every age, of one's own self-respect and of the respect of others. The father, who holds a post which necessitates very hard work, devotes himself to it entirely, and has probably reaped the fruits of his labour, for he knows his business better than most men. I calculate his fortune to be a clear two or three hundred thousand francs put by; they have two houses at Lyons. Their daughter is their only child; either now or at a later date, she will inherit everything. You may well imagine that, up to the present, the question of interest has not come in on either side, but it will necessarily be considered in the marriage contract, and on that point we shall soon come to an agreement. The matter at present to decide is when the marriage shall take place. For the young lady's sake, and for my own, it would be better for it to be sooner than late. We see each other every day, and this state of half-bliss will not suffice for us. And besides, both on her side and on mine, it is too serious a matter for it to do other-

wise than occupy our minds, and this pre-occupation may distract me too much in my business matters. I shall have everything to arrange, though, before we can set up house-keeping : there will be every household requisite to buy, from the first plate to the first tablecloth, stores of every kind, and so many other things. . . . We are both of us inclined to the most careful management, and to a well-ordered but strict economy. We shall have to set up housekeeping though, and that is no small matter just at present, when everything is so dear.¹ Before attending to that, or doing anything at all, I declared that I owed you, and the family, the respect and justly deserved proof of my confidence, and that I would begin nothing till I had received your answer and your approval. Our family is not like a great many others ; we love each other for our own sakes, and it would be impossible and unjust to even imagine that my family would, out of any interested motive, receive the news of my decision coldly. If Heaven be pleased to continue to bless my labours their fruit will always be common to us all. Above all things I desire to inspire my dear Juliette with the conviction that regard for my family is the first proof she can give me of her regard for me. All she has heard of the union existing amongst us has made her ready to conceive this feeling promptly, and I am certain she possesses claims on a reciprocal regard on your part as soon as I have introduced her to you. This will be one of my earliest desires when once we are united. You will perhaps think I am choosing a very critical moment for my marriage. But it is just at this period of general dissolution that a man must seek his happiness within his own home, and double his courage by gathering it together. The principles of liberty and equality which have gained the day allow of more simplicity in life, and such simplicity of habits bring one much nearer to real and solid enjoyment than the whirl of society, and of show in general. To conclude, my dear friend, I have the satisfaction of a happy outlook on the future which my change of condition offers me.

¹ As to the costliness of living in Paris, early in 1793, see Taine, *Le Gouvernement révolutionnaire*. Vol. II, p. 235, and following, especially pp. 240 and 241.

I count on your good wishes and your blessing. You may be persuaded that I return them a hundredfold.¹

“J. RÉCAMIER.”

This lengthy document, which we cannot accept without a certain amount of criticism, only makes the often proposed, and frequently discussed, problem of Mme. Récamier's marriage yet more irritating. The engagement was not a long one. The business arrangement,—for to our thinking it was such—was soon concluded. The marriage certificate of Jacques Récamier and Juliette Bernard has not been found; it is not among the Archives of the Department of the Seine.² Happily for us, in Jal's *Dictionnaire critique*, under the head-of “Récamier,” the following document is published :

“Du mercredy 24 avril 1793, acte de mariage de Jacques Rose Récamier, âgé de quarante-deux ans, né à Lyon, dept. du Rhône et Loire, le 9 Mars 1751, négociant, domicilié à Paris, rue et section du Mail, fils de François Récamier et d'Emerode (*sic*) de la Roche, décédés, et Jeanne-Françoise-Julie-Adélaïde-Bernard, âgée de 15 ans, née à Lyon, le 3 Décembre 1777, domiciliée à Paris rue des Sts. Pères, section des Quatre Nations, fille de Jean Bernard, receveur des contributions publiques susd. rue, et de Marie-Julie Malton (?) presents et consentants. (Signé) Jaquotot, Bernard, Simonart, J. F. j. A. Bernard, M. Malton (?), C. Bigonnet, Bergeron, A. Revenaz.”

Thus at the moment of his marriage, Jacques-Rose Récamier was exactly the same age as Arnolphe, in the *École des Femmes*, when he thinks of espousing the innocent Agnes, just about to leave her “little convent.” What came of this union? Here the difficulty begins and interpretations vary. One point indeed is clear beyond all possibility of doubt. Not only did Mme. Récamier never bear a child, but she certainly never was anything more to her husband than a companion,

¹ Addressed “Citoyen, Lyons, 456.” We are indebted to Mme. Faure-Delphin, of Lyons, for supplying us with this document, which is so valuable to us for our purpose.

² Monsieur Lazard, curator of this collection, has sought it in vain.

devoted in her anxiety to please him, care for him, and protect him from his own faults. Mme. Lenormant, whose testimony on this delicate matter is both rather courageous and very sincere, has stated as much, quite definitely. Every one of her expressions should be weighed. "This bond," she writes,¹ "was indeed never more than an apparent one. Mme. Récamier received nothing more than his name from her husband. This may sound surprising, but my mission is not to explain the fact, I merely certify it, as all those who, as friends of M. and Mme. Récamier, were admitted to their intimacy, might have certified it. M. Récamier's intercourse with his wife was never anything but *paternal*." We must note the word *paternal*, which was not unintentionally used. To make things clearer, Mme. Lenormant adds, respecting Juliette, "she provided for all M. Récamier's needs with a prudent and *daughterly* affection."² A little further on in her book she returns to the same question, and once more asserts that Juliette Récamier was "neither wife nor mother." It cannot be denied that Mme. Récamier's adopted daughter was in a better position than any other person to define and judge so paradoxical a state of things. With regard to such a delicate matter, a woman's judgment is more valuable than any other. If this one needed confirmation we should find it in an unpublished letter from Mme. de Staél,³ who, in the year 1811, speaks to Mme. Récamier of the "white wreath," which she is still entitled to wear, and of the happiness the future may yet hold for her.

That which Mme. Lenormant left unsaid, others have since desired to know, and this curiosity was probably not a vain one, for, delicate as the problem is, the interpretation of a whole character depends on its solution. The question was therefore taken up again. Mme. Récamier's "case" was discussed, and how was the mystery to be explained otherwise than by the simplest and likewise the most brutal of suppositions?

Mérimée was one of the first to embody the legend which would account for Mme. Récamier's abnormal destiny by the

¹ *Souv. et Corr.* I, p. 13.

² *Souv. et Corr.*, p. 13.

³ Communicated to us by M. Ch. de Loménie.

existence of an exceptional physiological condition. "One day," Maxime du Camp tells us,¹ "when we were talking to him about Chateaubriand, whom he had known, our conversation by a natural transition passed to Mme. Récamier's loudly vaunted virtue. He exclaimed: Do not judge her harshly, I beg. She is to be pitied more than blamed: it was a case of *force majeure*." Then, with a despairing upward gesture of his arms, and looking heavenwards, he added: "Poor Juliette! she suffered from it, bitterly!" In a still less kindly manner, Pons, in his work on *Sainte-Beuve et ses inconnues*,² has repeated the opinion that Juliette's chief merit lay in a fault in her physical organization. "Nature," he explains, "had debarred her from bestowing herself completely, and none of her adorers was able to break down the barrier which defended her virtue." With less open spite Clément de Ris declares: "I should have been curious to hear the opinion, on this point, of another lady, whose competence nobody will dispute,—Queen Margaret of Navarre."³ Doctors were appealed to for their opinion on the question. Dr. Cabanès has lately intervened several times, and is very definitely in favour of the theory as to a faulty conformation.⁴ Song writers, in their turn, have contributed their stanzas. The least obscene is this anonymous quatrain, which brings both Chateaubriand and Mme. Récamier on the scene.⁵

Juliette et René s'aimaient d'amour si tendre,
Que Dieu sans les punir a su les pardonner;
Il n'avait pas voulu que l'une pût donner,
Ce que l'autre ne pouvait prendre.

Simple and well-established as such a solution may appear, we find it impossible to accept it. One special observation forces itself upon the mind,—Mme. Récamier lived till the year 1849, during all that time we see her ill or out of health on more than one occasion, but at the most critical periods of her long life, we never discover any of those deep-seated disturbances which are the result, in the female organization, of

¹ *Souvenirs littéraires*. I, pp. 458–459.

² Pp. 134–135.

³ *Bulletin du Bibliophile*. Article quoted p. 1198.

⁴ Consult especially the *Cabinet secret de l'histoire*, 2nd series, p. 270.

⁵ Quoted in the *Intermédiaire des chercheurs*, 1882, p. 591.

any fault in the physiological conformation. This remark has been made by members of the medical profession.¹ Mme. Récamier's beauty was due especially to the remarkable harmony of her physique: the continuance of this state of equilibrium, the stability of her character, the absence of irritability, the sureness of her judgment, would ill accord with the supposition as to any constitutional anomaly. But there is something else, and we must above all things rely on two arguments which strike us as being particularly strong in their simplicity.

Even with Mérimée's hypothesis nothing seems easier of acceptance than the fact of Mme. Récamier's marriage. Juliette was only fifteen: she was ignorant about life, and of certain things about herself. But later on, in 1807, we see this same Juliette Récamier fall in love, with all the naturalness and sincerity of a woman in her thirtieth year, with Prince Augustus of Prussia; we see her, according to documents which have hitherto never seen the light of publicity, carry her plan of marrying him as far as she possibly could: and her desire to accomplish it is so intense that when M. Récamier's entreaties force her to relinquish it, she makes an attempt to kill herself. This woman of thirty cannot possibly have been ignorant of things concerning which the girl of fifteen may very well have been uninstructed. This has been remarked in a very common-sense manner, by Cuvillier-Fleury. "If Mme. Récamier had been as incapable of maternity as gossip has represented her to have been, would she ever have thought of divorcing with the object of making a second marriage? How could she ever have thought of such an alliance if she had not been sure of herself?"²

Can any doubt be felt of Mme. Récamier's prudence and good faith at this grave crisis in her life? And how are we to account for the persistent delusion of a woman so little likely to be deceived as Mme. de Staél, and one so eminently fitted by her position to receive or discover all the secrets of her friend? Mme. de Staél never ceased pressing her friend to carry out a plan to marry which had been conceived under

¹ We owe this observation to Professor Poncet, of Lyons.

² *Posthumes et Revenants*, pp. 279, 280.

her own eyes, and which she herself followed up as long as any hope of renewing it remained. The passage from one of her letters, written in 1811, is not the only one worth noting in Mme. de Staél's correspondence with Mme. Récamier. "I am distressed," she writes, on October 31st, 1811 or 1812, "that you should have ruined your own chances for the sake of a person (M. Récamier) who will not, I trust, commit any act unworthy of you, but who perhaps no longer has the faculties necessary for honouring your sacrifice."¹

When Mme. Récamier accepted the proposal of marriage with Prince Augustus, she wrote to her husband, begging him to agree to a divorce. M. Récamier, in Mme. Lenormant's words, expressed his "regret at having respected susceptibilities and repugnancies, but for which a closer bond would have forbidden all thought of such a separation."²

Further proof may be desired: but on a subject so delicate it will be understood that demonstration is less easy than comment. Still nothing, to our mind, can throw a clearer light than these words written by a husband to his wife, at so critical a moment, and in a letter which was certainly never intended for publication. The outcome of it all, as we see it, is that M. Récamier had met with no physical impossibility, and it is in an endeavour to clear up the meaning of the two words *susceptibilities* and *repugnancies* that we may arrive at the truth.

The whole of this truth may never be discovered. We have already had occasion to refer to the curious book in which Mme. Mohl attempted to complete Mme. Lenormant's story on certain points. M. Récamier, according to the English authoress, was Juliette Bernard's own father. The young wife lived on with her mother for two years after her marriage. Mme. Mohl points out what an object of suspicion the banker must have been to the Committee of Public Safety. She believes that at that difficult period, when all legal inheritance stood in so much danger, the only way to ensure the transmission of his fortune to Juliette Bernard was to marry her. It is somewhat curious, indeed, that we find no mention anywhere, either in 1793 or at a later date, when the churches were

¹ M. de Loménié's MSS.

² *Souv. et Corr.* I, p. 141.

opened and public worship restored, of any religious marriage.¹ Mme. Mohl, when she recorded an explanation which she had frequently heard given, was no doubt convinced that she was establishing the truth.

Let us turn back to that letter from Récamier, which a fortunate chance has thrown into our hands. It is, no doubt, full of the correct formulas in which a man would announce the marriage he was resolved to make to his near kinsfolk. All the conventional phraseology of the period is there. Yet how carefully, from the very outset, does Récamier insist on the reasonableness of his plan : it is no sudden decision he is about to realize, it is a situation of long standing which he is going to settle. “I am not in love with her,” he says, “but I am truly and tenderly attached to her.” We must not let Récamier’s “tears” blind us. What he says to Monsieur Delphin as to his relations with Mme. Bernard, by way of replying beforehand to the objection which may be put forward, his acknowledgment of a “feeling of a perhaps warmer nature” which might have preceded his friendship with that lady, is just as much acknowledgment as any gallant man might permit himself, as a hint of what discretion or gratitude would forbid him to reveal. To our mind, the understanding between Jacques Récamier and the lady whose age had deprived her of any pretension beyond “that of educating her daughter,” was complete. We must not forget that Récamier was an exceedingly practical man. Does he not say, at the very moment when he is describing his state of agitation, and as though to give himself the lie, that this might divert his mind from his business affairs. And we must also note that Récamier is quite aware of his own critical position in February 1793 : at the close of his letter he excuses himself for having chosen such a moment for his marriage.

His long letter to M. Delphin, then, is, as we take it, the production of a clever man, considerate for his own family, accustomed to finding himself in difficult positions, and who is

¹ We do not conclude from this that no religious marriage took place ; it is well-known that in bourgeois circles, where a horror of the priests who had sworn obedience to the Republic was felt, the religious rite was frequently performed secretly, in some room, by an “unsworn” priest.

endeavouring to present, under a simple form, a plan which really is considerably complicated. Was he Juliette Récamier's father? Such an affirmation would be both indiscreet and overbold. But, amongst all the hypotheses as to Mme. Récamier's marriage, no other seems to us so probable as that of a union arranged between Mme. Bernard and the man whom she had obliged. It was difficult to write to M. Delphin what it was impossible to tell M. Bernard: There is nothing surprising in the fact that everything should have been done to throw dust in people's eyes with regard to this union.

Récamier sincerely believed that he was in great danger during the Revolution. "I know from his own words," Madame Lenormant tells us, "that almost every day he used to go to see the executions. He was present at the King's execution, he saw the Queen die, he saw the "farmers-general," M. de Laborde, the Court banker, all the men with whom he had lived in social or business intercourse, guillotined, one after the other; and when I expressed my surprise at his having forced himself to witness such a hideous sight, he replied that he had done it to accustom himself to the fate which probably awaited him, and he had tried to prepare for this by watching others die."¹ As a matter of fact, his fears were not devoid of foundation. The National Archives contain important papers proving the extent of the danger which threatened him.²

The documents preserved do not tell us everything, but it is quite conceivable that in face of so evident a danger a bold man, to ensure the transmission of his fortune to Mlle. Bernard, might choose an expedient which, at another period and under other circumstances, would deserve a severer judgment. It is not difficult to admit the existence, in this case, of one of those unconsummated marriages of such frequent occurrence towards the close of the eighteenth century. Let us quote one instance only. In 1802, Adèle Filleul, who became the wife of Baron de Souza, and published a dozen novels, the best-known of which is entitled *Adèle de Sénanges*, had first married the Comte de Flahaut. She declared that this

¹ *Souv. et Corr.* I., pp. 13, 14.

² F⁷. 4774⁶⁸.

marriage had never been consummated, and ascribed the paternity of her son to Talleyrand.¹ The extent to which the conditions of marriage were disturbed during the Revolutionary period is a matter of common knowledge.² The bond which linked Juliette Bernard to Jacques Récamier was a clever formality, the happiest issue from which, it must be acknowledged, would have been the husband's demise. He, unfortunately, escaped the danger he had so resolutely faced. And hence arose all the subsequent complications. Juliette could not remain in perpetual ignorance of the circumstances which had led up to her marriage. Whether she became aware of all or only of some of them, she knew enough to make her show *susceptibilities* and *repugnancies* before which her husband could only yield.

Legally married to a man who could not be more to her than an affectionate friend, Juliette Récamier might have acted as the Marquise du Deffand had acted before her, namely, sought love in adventures, and chanced, some day, on another President Hénault. Did she take this course? That we shall learn as we follow the story of her life. At this particular moment all her care seems to be given to preserving her modesty. We find an innocent note of hers, hitherto unpublished, addressed to Mme. Delphin, and dated "the 27th of Year II of the French Republic." It runs as follows :

" You speak of happiness, my sweet sister. The happiness I have felt most keenly was to receive the expression of your feelings. My attachment to my husband so endears all his belongings to me that every proof they give me of their regard is precious to me. One which is very much so to me is what you say about my zeal for his happiness. That is my sole and sweetest care, on which I have set all my hopes. The only thing lacking to us both is the delight of living amongst our own families. I earnestly hope that this happy reunion may some day take place. I thank you for sharing this sentiment, so that you may love me a little beforehand.

¹ See *Relations secrètes des agents de Louis XVIII*, p. 118.

² See Adolphe Schmidt, *Paris pendant la Révolution*, translated by Viollet. Vol. II, p. 81 (Paris, Champion.)

"It is very good of you, my dear sister, to wish for my portrait ; if you were better acquainted with me you would know it is not a present worth giving you, but it will be a way of recalling me to your remembrance. I shall take advantage of it eagerly.

"JULIETTE B. RÉCAMIER."¹

One other letter of Mme. Récamier's, written at this period, is known to us ; it is addressed to a friend of her childhood, but it does not tell us anything we do not already know.² She did her utmost to conceal the difficulties of her position from others and from herself. Récamier was a frivolous man, but he was both intelligent and kind-hearted. It is impossible to believe that if Mme. Mohl's theory had been the true one, he would have dared to pen his sentence about *susceptibilities* and *repugnancies*. However that may have been, Juliette, at a very early age, was called upon to make serious decisions. She was helped by her father's affection ; his letters to her are most tender.³

It may have been that the effect of all these abnormal circumstances in the midst of which she was placed had been to leave her with a certain distrust, an inclination to discouragement, a dread of love, a sort of resigned serenity and the first germ of that coquetry with which people have so frequently reproached her without understanding the causes of it.

¹ M. Ch. de Loménie's papers.

² It was published in the *Catalogue Bovet*, series X. *Femmes célèbres*, p. 810, No. 2120.

³ They are preserved amongst M. Ch. de Loménie's papers,

CHAPTER II

UNDER THE DIRECTORY (OCTOBER 25, 1795—NOVEMBER 9, 1799)

The manners and customs of the Directory period.—Mme. Récamier lives somewhat apart.—Her beauty; her first triumphs.—Meeting with Mme. de Staël (close of 1798).—Her friendship with La Harpe.—Juliette's *salon* Lemontey, Camille Jordan and Degérando.—Paul David.—Lucien Bonaparte's love for Mme. Récamier (1799); his letters.—Mme. Récamier in 1799.

THE transformation of French manners and customs which marked the days after the “Terror” is an oft-told tale.¹ Society under the Directory was inspired with a desire for comfort, a longing for enjoyment, and amusement was passionately sought. These were the days of the dandies known as *muscadins*, the exquisites or *merveilleux*, the *incroyables*, and the *collet noir*; the days, too, of the *merveilleuses* whom everyone admired at the *jardins anglais* or at the *bals des victimes*. Everywhere luxury reigned supreme.

Dress in itself betrayed these new tendencies.² While the *muscadins*, armed with their “*pouvoir executif*” and wearing grey dress-coats and green cravats, stirred the indignation of the patriots, the ladies were hesitating between “anglomania and a passion for the antique.”³ The reader should glance at them in the lithographs of Carle Vernet, who himself was caught in the same whirlpool.⁴ This was the period of

¹ We must abstain though from exaggeration. “It is the contrast between the Spartan habits of the Republic of Robespierre’s time which makes those of the Republic of the Thermidor appear so loose.” Aulard, *La Réaction thermidoriennne à Paris, Revue de Paris*, December 15th, 1898, p. 846.

² See J. Quicherat, *Histoire du costume en France*, p. 634, etc.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 637.

⁴ See *J. C. et H. Vernet*, by A. Durande, Hetzel, p. 59.

the turban, dear to the heart of Mme. de Staél, and of the shawl, adopted by Mme. Récamier. Some ladies wore gowns of Athenian or Roman style. There were no more sleeves, but bare arms; no shoes, nothing but a sole fastened by ribbons crossed round the leg. The petticoat and chemise were entirely done away with. Every sort of peculiarity was accepted. At a Frascati ball Mme. Tallien appeared dressed as a savage in flesh-coloured tights and a lawn tunic,¹ with gold rings round her legs. Mme. Hamelin walked across the Champs Elysées clad in a gauze tunic.² One general idea prevailed among all these attempts and all this audacity, namely, that a woman's dress should accentuate and not conceal the form of the body. This tendency scarcely admitted of any other exception than the wearing of blonde wigs.

The whole society of the Directory lived again, as we may say, in the book devoted to that subject by the brothers Edmond and Jules de Goncourt³—a one-sided book, undoubtedly, the work of two observers who only cared to see ruins and rubbish, where much that was new was really springing up. In that patient reconstitution, however, precise and picturesque details and extracts from contemporary documents are grouped with such art that no frame could be more suitable for the picture of Mme. Récamier as we must imagine her at this time.

The historian—or the chronicler, at all events—takes us to the Chaussée d'Antin, “that home of luxury whither so many millionaires came to work off their riches,”⁴ and there, in that house which Récamier purchased from Necker,⁵ he shows us Juliette's own room. The furniture is quite that of the period, mahogany everywhere. “A garland of flowers, escaping from the beaks of two gilt-bronze swans, borders the bedstead; this is reflected in a glass set between it and the

¹ Quicherat, work quoted, p. 640.

² *Ibid.* See *Nouveau Paris*, by Mercier, and *Les Costumes parisiens*, by La Mésangère.

³ *Histoire de la société française pendant le Directoire*, 4th edition, 1876.

⁴ P. 49.

⁵ *Souv. et Corr.* I, p. 23. The house was restored by Berthaut and Percier, and furnished by Jacob.—*Souv. et Corr.*, pp. 25 and 26.

wall, and framed in mahogany with gold beadings."¹ The draperies are of "chamois-coloured silk, with gold ornaments, over violet silk curtains with a black pattern." "We are in Pompeii," says de Goncourt. "Nothing is wanting, not even the bronze candelabrum nor the marble statue."²

The same writer shows us how the pecuniary fortunes which admitted of such luxury were established or developed. They were improvised, so to speak, "on the rickety steps of the staircase opposite the Rue Vivienne—the Perron."³ Riches were a necessity, indeed, for men who gave such splendid dinners, opened such magnificent drawing-rooms, drove their carriages in the street, and owned their box at the theatres. Amidst all this insolent display of newborn wealth, Récamier appears to have been one of the more moderate men. His fortune dated from the days before the Revolution and, although often taxed with imprudence, he was never accused of any dishonesty in business matters. Juliette, too, contrived to maintain a praiseworthy moderation. Yet she is mentioned as having been present at the Fête on New Year's Day of the Year V, and the *Miroir*, which describes the procession of queens of fashion along the Champs Elysées, brackets Mmes. Récamier and Tallien "who shone amidst the crowd like two soft lights."⁴ The juxtaposition is to be regretted, indeed, for whether she drives in her dark red coach "white, and arrayed in a cloud,"⁵ or rules at the Luxembourg, where every merry-making is of her devising,⁶ or enters some drawing-room with her arm resting on the shoulder of Barras,⁷ Mme. Tallien stands as the very symbol incarnate of the Directory. Across

¹ P. 50.

² Goncourt advises his readers to consult, as to this description, *Plan, coupe, élévation des plus belles maisons*. An IX.

³ P. 152.

⁴ The *Miroir*, of the 29th of Germinal, year V (April 18th, 1797), gives a description of the three fêtes at Longchamps. "On the first day, the Bois de Boulogne was well nigh deserted. The second day was more brilliant; there were twice as many carriages; the traffic had been regulated; the vehicles passed up and down in two parallel lines, so that all their occupants could see each other easily as they drove along. Those who are fond of comparisons and have a passion for contrasts had every reason for satisfaction, for they beheld Mme. Récamier and Mme. Tallien shining through the crowd like two soft lights."—*Bibliothèque Nationale*, L 2/c, 916.

⁵ Goncourt, pp. 295, 296.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 296.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 299.

the stage of the same period Juliette Récamier passes, in all the glory of her personal charm, but cloaked with a reserve, thanks to which she remains mistress of herself and protected from all dangers.¹

This point has been much and lengthily discussed. Some have averred that Juliette remained quite a stranger to the social life of the Directory period. This theory is put forward, rather than demonstrated, by Mme. Lenormant.² Benjamin Constant asserts that she never appeared at the "Court" of the Directory.³ Others, on the contrary, maintained a quite different opinion. Ch. Monselet calls Juliette one of the "three Graces" of the Directory, together with Mme. Tallien and Joséphine de Beauharnais. "These three ladies" he declares, "drove Paris wild, and saw the most illustrious personages at their feet,—those lovely feet which they wore bare, except for sandals, and with emeralds on their toes. They were to be seen everywhere, at the concerts, at which Garat used to sing—at the balls where Trénitz used to dance, poor Trénitz who died mad at Charenton!—They were the soul of all gaiety."⁴ Arsène Houssaye, too, in his *Notre-Dame de Thermidor*, dwells on the intercourse between Juliette and Mme. Tallien.⁵ He mentions them together, and describes them as going to balls in company.⁶ He quotes Mme. Récamier as being among the ladies who crowded to the house of the ambassador Esseid-ali Effendi to receive attar of roses and sachets of perfume which had been blessed by the Mufti.⁷ And, as a matter of fact, a newspaper, *le Thé*,⁸ in its issue of August 7, 1797, quotes Mme. Récamier in its list of the persons presented to the Turkish ambassador. Arsène Houssaye adds: "She was one of the neo-Greeks who rose, half naked indeed, but fully clad in their own modesty, from the ruins of a bloodstained Pompeii."⁹

¹ ". . . among that heap of muslin, lawn, and gauze, in that white kingdom, Madame Récamier, with her virginal taste, ever and always robed in white, moves along, light as a woven cloud."—Goncourt, p. 412.

² *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 14.

³ *Fragments sur Mme. Récamier*, p. 339.

⁴ *Portraits après décès*, p. 134.

⁵ P. 7. ⁶ Pp. 23, 24 and note. ⁷ Pp. 422-243.

⁸ *Bibliothèque Nationale*, L 2/c, 948-949.

⁹ P. 445, see also two delightful pages, 446 and 447.

These are the harmless exaggerations of a certain set of writers. Some serious historians have amplified the part played by Mme. Récamier under the Directory in a quite different but equally excessive fashion. One of the most recent and the most scrupulous of the historians of the French Revolution, M. Aulard, considers Mme. Récamier's *salon*, just after the 9th of Thermidor,¹ as one of the centres "in which the bourgeois Republic was prepared." This, to our thinking, is to ascribe an influence to Mme. Récamier which she was not to attain until a much later date.

As so often happens, the truth lies midway between the two opinions. There is no doubt but that Mme. Récamier, during the Directory period, was commencing that series of triumphs which were to make her one of the queens of Paris under the Consulate. On this point direct testimony abounds. In his *Souvenirs*, François-Yves Besnard² asserts that in the first year of the Directory he saw Juliette Récamier go upstairs to the apartment of Barras with Mme. Tallien and Mme. Bonaparte. Thibaudeau, in the first volume of his *Mémoires*,³ when explaining the *changes brought about by the 9th of Thermidor*, says: "Paris once more reigned supreme in matters of fashion and taste. Two women, both of them famous for their beauty, Mme. Tallien, and a little later Mme. Récamier, took the lead. It was at this period that the revolution in the habits of private life, begun in 1789, was finally completed. In female dress, in the mode of wearing the hair, adopted by both sexes, and even in the matter of furniture, the antique style, already introduced in artistic matters by David and his school, took the place of the Gothic and feudal styles, and those strange and mixed forms invented by Court thralldom. Mme. Récamier owed her triumphs to her personal charm. She had the beauty, the grace, the simplicity, of one of Raphael's Madonnas." Towards the same time, the critic Etienne-Jean Delécluze met Mme. Récamier at Lullin's with Mmes. Tallien, Carvalho,

¹ He brackets it with the *salons* of Mme. Tallien and Mme. de Staél, *Histoire politique de la Révolution française*, p. 524. Comp. Rondelet, *Éloge de Mme. Récamier*, pp. 104, 105.

² Vol. II, p. 146.

³ Chap. XI.

Chabot de la Tour, and Joubertout.¹ This, he tells us later on, was in 1799.² And in a letter dated November 2nd, 1796, Charles de Constant³ relates that on a fine "Primidi," Mme. Tallien "had reigned in peace until Juliette appeared." She has "a most charming face," says our informant, "the liveliest figure, and she *affects* the most elegant *simplicity*." Mme. Tallien, feeling her supremacy threatened, "threw off the shawl which she still had on her shoulders. She stood up, her fine figure, her bare arms, her grace, the beauties of every kind which few other women possess in so perfect a degree, were noticed and even praised by Mme. Récamier, who, with her quiet dress and simple grace, made no attempt to put Mme. Tallien's splendour into the shade."

From these testimonies we must conclude that under the Directory Juliette Récamier was neither too shy in her reserve, nor too indiscreet in her ambition. She made no effort to play any part in the great political intrigues of the period. She met Bonaparte for the first time on the 10th of December, 1797, at an entertainment given by the Directory in honour of the conqueror of Italy,⁴ but this meeting had no result. In the spring of 1799, too, Juliette was invited to a party given by Barras at the Luxembourg.⁵ It was a concert, and she met Larevelliére-Lépeaux and Talleyrand there. The entertainment finished with a supper and she was placed to the left of Barras, whom she begged to show mercy to a priest then lying in prison. "The *Gazettes* of the period," says Mme. Lenormant, "reported this entertainment, and published four lines of impromptu verse, recited at the supper by the poet Despaze and addressed to Mme. Récamier."⁶

She was content to accept such homage as was laid at her feet. Her extreme youth, for she was only twenty in the year 1797, secured her a position apart in this society, the confused medley of which in these drawing-rooms, which opened their doors to any new-comer, is excellently described

¹ *Souvenirs de soixante années*, p. 51.

² *Ibid.*, p. 185.

³ *Nouvelle Revue rétrospective*, I, 1894, 2, p. 185, etc.

⁴ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 19 and following. Comp. Paul Gautier, *Mme. de Staél and Napoléon*, p. 5.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 21, and following.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

in Picard's *Médiocre et Rampant*. When the Consulate arrived Juliette was swept along by the current and obliged to yield to it. Under the Directory we must think of her as still fighting against it, and protected by the freshness of her youthful charm. Mme. de Bawr in her *Souvenirs*,¹ tells us the manner of life led by the contractors to the Army of the Republic under the Directory. They owned or hired magnificent dwellings, kept open house, had the best boxes at the theatres. In their palatial residences, furnished by Jacob, splendid balls were given. The hostesses were gowned by Mme. Germond, their hair was dressed by Hypolite. At evening parties the supper, which was highly appreciated by the parasites who swarmed in this newly-formed society, was preceded by a display of fireworks. This was the day of the *bamboches* and the *bambocheurs*. "The acting of charades, then a fashionable form of amusement," says Mme. de Bawr,² "opened a large field to jokers, and the pranks thus rendered possible may be imagined when the wardrobe of the hostess was ransacked for the necessary costumes."

Juliette was spared this as long as she had no house in which to entertain. Meanwhile her beauty was expanding like a flower. Proof of this is to be seen in Mme. Morin's portrait, painted in 1799.³ "Mme. Récamier," writes M. Louis de Loménie, in his unpublished *Souvenirs*,⁴ "never wore diamonds, pearls were the only ornaments suited to her exquisitely simple style of dress. A peculiarity of her beauty was that at first sight it was more attractive than dazzling; the more one looked at her, the more beautiful she seemed." This last sentence is further explained by the two fullest descriptions of the celebrated beauty left us by contemporary witnesses. Let us note once more, and to Mme. Lenormant's honour, that there is not a touch of commonplace and conventional praise in the portrait she gives us of her aunt. "A supple and elegant figure," she says, "a neck and shoulders admirable both as to shape and proportion, a little red mouth, pearly teeth, pretty arms, perhaps a trifle too thin, naturally curling chestnut hair, a nose delicate and regular in

¹ P. 162, etc., 2nd edition.
Souv. et Corr., I, pp. 15 and 19.

² *Ibid.*, p. 169.

³ See also
⁴ M. Charles de Loménie's papers.

shape, but very French in type, an incomparably brilliant complexion, that outshone all others, a physiognomy that was full of simplicity and occasionally most roguish, rendered irresistibly attractive by the kindness of its expression, a touch of something at once indolent and proud, and an admirably well-set head. To her, truly, might have been applied St. Simon's words concerning the Duchesse de Bourgogne—that she walked like a goddess on the clouds. Such was Mme. Récamier at the age of eighteen.”¹ The second portrait, which is more crude and means to be spiteful, agrees, nevertheless, to a great extent, with that drawn by Mme. Lenormant. We owe it to that Baron de Trémont of whose unpublished notes M. Frédéric Masson has made use.² “I saw Mme. Récamier,” he writes, “in all her glory. No woman could have had a prettier face, but exquisite as it was, its beauty was more that of the grisette than that of the great lady. Her expression, though, was essentially unlike that of the grisette. It was remarkable for its extreme modesty, but it was not the purity of Raphael’s virgins: There was a certain affectation about it, you felt she was trying to attract attention. Her eyes were fine, but lacked expression, and her complexion was splendid. Chestnut hair—not enough of it, but silky as to texture. Ordinary feet, no elegance about her figure, though it was well proportioned; her arms were thin, and her chest flat.” Having devoted a separate study to the pictures and busts of Mme. Récamier, we need not here enter upon a useless criticism of the details of her appearance. The Baron de Trémont, in spite of his circumlocutions, does not greatly disagree with Mme. Lenormant. Like her, he observes the well-proportioned figure, the clearness of complexion which struck all contemporary observers, and the animation of the general expression. What we are glad to note, in each of these portraits, is that this regular beauty was above all things animated. We must imagine Juliette Récamier at the age of twenty, not as Gerard painted her, in far too academic a style, but as David sketched her, with her kindly glance—

¹ *Souv. et Corr.*, pp. 14 and 15.

² See his article in the *Figaro Illustré*, p. 53.

just a touch of roguish merriment sharpening her delicate smile, or as she is in Chinard's delightful busts, pretty, certainly rather than beautiful, with that dainty face, where everything, even the light curls of her hair, tend to produce an impression of graceful harmony. Looking at these pictures and these busts, we understand how Juliette may sometimes have been accused of coquetry or affectation. Later on, when the eyes were more colourless, and age had thinned the lips, those delicate features lent to her face the most varied and, occasionally, the most mysterious expressions. Simple and natural as she was with her chosen friends, Juliette, from her earliest youth, was forced to defend herself against importunate admirers by an apparent coquetry; but this, if we may judge by David's masterpiece, was not her habitual expression. Baron de Trémont's final remark also strikes us as being somewhat incorrect. Brillat-Savarin, in his *Physiologie du goûт*, expresses a very different opinion. Mme. Récamier's bust was particularly admirable, so much so that towards the end of her life a regrettable scruple led her to deface, or permit the defacement of, Chinard's representation of her which bore testimony to this beauty.

Juliette was a very good dancer; she was very much appreciated in the "shawl-dance" described by Mme. de Staël, and which Mme. Lenormant remembered with admiration. The Comte de Forbin was fond of relating that in her youth, Mme. Récamier excelled in dancing that celebrated gavotte which had elicited the Chevalier de Boufflers' famous remark about Mme. Tallien, "No other woman ever danced so well with her arms!"¹ All these triumphs flattered M. Récamier's vanity, and in the course of the summer of 1796 he took the Château de Clichy, "entirely furnished," for his wife.² For several seasons she spent the best months of the year there, receiving numerous guests, and doing the honours

¹ Rondelet, *Éloge de Mme. Récamier*, p. 102.

² *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 26. In the course of the last few years the newspapers have announced the discovery at Clichy of a hunting-lodge said to have been built in the days of Louis XIV for Mlle. de la Vallière, and inhabited at a later date, first by Grimod de la Reynière, and then by Mme. Récamier.

of the splendid park which was adorned with rare plants and flowers, a very new form of luxury, in those days. A description of all these merry-makings is given in H. de Latouche's novel, *Fragoletta*. But all the every-day incidents of this brilliant existence were soon to be eclipsed by a far more important event. Just at the time when Mme. Récamier was becoming the idol of her day, she met Mme. de Staël. A fortunate chance was to alter her whole life.

Up to this period, as we have seen, M. Récamier had been living in a house in the Rue du Mail.¹ At the close of the year 1798, he bought from Mme. de Staël, who represented her father, a house (No. 7) in the Rue du Mont Blanc.² From this business affair dates the intercourse which was established between two women, each famous, though for different reasons. Juliette herself wrote the story of the first meeting. The passage, which is still extant, is a charming one.³ It shows us in the same drawing-room, Mme. de Staël,⁴ oddly accoutred, in her morning-gown and her little flower-trimmed hat, which gave her a foreign look, gracious and eager in her politeness, carrying off her superiority with an easy air, fixing her great questioning eyes and kindly glance on the youthful beauty, and Mme. Récamier herself blushing all over, both confused and charmed. She was so much affected by the influence of the other woman's impetuous nature that the impression of this first interview was never effaced from her mind.

It is curious to find Benjamin Constant himself telling the story of the budding friendship between these two women, with both of whom he fell in love.⁵ He had better opportunities than any other person for forming an opinion of Mme. de Staël, and judging the effect her presence might produce. "I know no other woman," he writes, "nor indeed any man

¹ No. 12, so Mme. Lenormant tells us in her *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 23 Comp. Rondelet, work quoted, pp. 110, 111.

² Now Rue de la Chaussée-d'Antin, *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 23.

³ *Souv. et Corr.* pp. 24 and 25.

⁴ We adopt the spelling Staël, without a diæresis. "The de Staël family has vainly striven to preserve the original spelling of its name; it has been forced into submitting to the diæresis." E. Deschanel, *Les déformations de la langue française*, p. 91.

⁵ See his *Fragment sur Mme. Récamier*, p. 341, etc.

more convinced of his or her own superiority over every other person, or who allows this conviction to weigh less heavily on others.”¹ Better than any other person he was able to judge the intercourse from thenceforth so continuous between Juliette and his illustrious friend. He explains the power of the sentiment which was henceforward to bind these two women, so different with regard to origin and temperament (the one representing strength and the other grace), by the deep affection which bound the one to her father and the other to her mother; their two souls sympathized in the piety of a similar worship. Ballanche, too, in his still unpublished Life of Mme. Récamier, analyses the causes of the prompt attraction between these two women: “Those who were admitted into the private circle of these two women, each famous in her own way, know how deeply interesting their conversations were. One could not help admiring the faculty possessed by the one for expressing a thousand new ideas, and the rapidity with which the other grasped and criticized them; the strong masculine mind which made all things known, and the delicate shrewd understanding that comprehended them all. By listening to them, in fact, one had the truest conception of energy tempered by grace, and of the noblest powers developed by reciprocal contact.”²

At that date, 1798, Mme. de Staél was thirty-two years old and Juliette was twenty-one. This difference of eleven years between the two friends explains how, from the very beginning of their intimacy, Germaine Necker was to play the affectionate and protecting part of an elder sister to the younger woman, whom we might almost call a girl. Mme. de Staél already possessed the authority conferred by a great and powerful talent united to a thorough experience of life. From this time forward her example was to guide and lead Mme. Récamier; the two lives were to be so closely woven together that for the space of twenty years there is no possibility of separating them.

¹ P. 342. Then follows a portrait of Mme. de Staél covering three pages, which is admirable, and besides, leaves many things to be read between the lines.

² P. 32 of M. Ch. de Loménie’s MSS.



Madame de Staël

They were drawn together by more than one analogy. Germaine Necker had married in 1786 a man years older than herself, that Baron de Stael-Holstein whom she may have tried to love, but whom she certainly cared but little for, and her marriage of convenience bore a strong resemblance to the one which was shortly to unite Juliette Bernard to Jacques Récamier.¹ Disappointed in her hopes of happiness Mme. de Stael let herself be carried away on the tide of social pleasures, opened her *salon* in the Rue de Bac, and made the life around her and within herself more animated. She was far less prudent though than Juliette; constraint weighed on her like hypocrisy, and reserve was as difficult for her as deceit.² Her free nature could brook no holding in; her tempestuous exaltation was an every-day thing, and the passion that burnt within her flamed out, like fire, from a soul that was too ardent to consume itself in silence. Temptations came to her, Narbonne caused her suffering and was loved all the more by her. Talleyrand fascinated her by his youth and elegance. Mathieu de Montmorency charmed her by his tenderness.³

Mme. de Stael, though, had within herself an activity and certain resources which, whilst extending her *rôle*, furnished a constant aliment to her passion. The Revolution had made of her a political woman, and whilst Juliette, too young and too much eclipsed by her, continued to live calmly and peacefully, Mme. de Stael was seen to arrive on the very foreground of the stage upon which the destinies of France were being played. She was the directress of the Constitutional side,

¹ See Albert Sorel's *Mme. de Stael*, p. 25 and following.

² In the *Thé*, of Saturday, May 13th, 1797, we read: "Madame la Baronne de Stael, who has scarcely been mentioned of late, is exceedingly well in health, and is spending her time pleasantly at Ormesson, near Paris, whilst waiting for her literary glory to shine with fresh splendour, for her husband, M. le Baron, to take up another *rôle* and for M. le Baron de Copet to give us another dish of his own particular kind. M. Mathieu de Montmorency, always faithful, continues to pay the most assiduous court to Mme. la Baronne." (*Bibl. Nat.*, L 2/c, 948-949). The number for July 29th contains a long article, which is very hard on Mme. de Stael. (Compare the numbers for the 16th and 20th August.) About the life of Mme. de Stael during and after the Revolution, see the important information contained in the *Memorial* by Norvins, Vol. II, page 80 and following. See especially the story of the "Suicide of Benjamin Constant," p. 95 and following, and the portrait of Mathieu de Montmorency, p. 103.

³ See Sainte-Beuve, *Causeries du Lundi*, Vol. XI, p. 439 and following.

not perhaps intervening in the very midst of the political struggle, but originating ideas and making them known, rather at random perhaps, but with a prodigality that we must admire. The story of all this is well known. She had trembled with joy on accompanying her father, July 14th, 1789 ; she had been attacked as a power, she had had the reform of the political constitution studied in her *salon*, had sided with the victims,¹ and tried to save the Queen. Then in September, 1792, she had taken refuge at Coppet, which from thenceforth became a place of refuge.² After this came her journey to England, where she found Montmorency again, then there was her first experience with Narbonne of the baseness of men and their mediocrity in passion. After this came her return in 1793 to M. de Staël. She then published her *Réflexions sur le procès de la Reine* (August, 1793). Her mother died, and she devoted herself almost entirely to her father and her two sons, but she was all fire and flame, always exuberant, insatiable. It was quite evident that she would never be contented with merely accomplishing duties that were too simple for her, and that from thenceforth she would take part in the most violent agitations.

It was just at this time that she met Benjamin Constant, the man who was to unsettle her whole life and who, later on, as we shall see, endeavoured to introduce himself into Mme. Récamier's existence. He was a year younger than Mme. de Staël and ten years older than Juliette, as he was born at Lausanne in 1767. A neglected and prodigiously precocious childhood ; an imagination which had been developed at the expense of other faculties, or, at any rate, of sentiment ; voyages and acquaintances that had given him a taste for political liberty ; the influence of the philosophers of the eighteenth century ; cosmopolitanism ; constant dissipation ; a *liaison* when a young man of twenty with Mme. de Charrière, a woman of forty³ ; a visit to the Court of Brunswick ; the beginning of some important works ; his marriage in 1789 with a woman who was both ugly and

¹ Sorel, p. 42.

² *Ibid.*

³ See the somewhat cynical letter of Sainte-Beuve about this *liaison*, *Correspondance*, Vol. II, p. 291.

unfaithful, the result of which was a divorce; incursions into politics, when he endeavoured to manifest his horror of absolutism and his ideas of liberty; all this together had made of Benjamin Constant, at the time he met Mme. de Staël in the year 1794, a wonderfully complex being, so intelligent that one is inclined to think he was the most intelligent man of the nineteenth century, and, at any rate, by his qualities less than by his vices, intensely fascinating for a woman of genius.¹

It is not for us—and we regret it—to state what this *liaison* of Benjamin Constant with Mme. de Staël was, although it was full of consequences for Mme. Récamier. Let us only note one passage from a letter of Constant's which, among other proofs, makes us realize the fascination which Mme. de Staël exercised over those around her. "I have rarely seen," he writes to Mme. de Charrière on the 21st of October, 1794, "such an amalgamation of astonishing and attractive qualities, such brilliancy and such precision, so expansive and refined a kindness, such generosity, a politeness so sweet and sustained in society, such charm, simplicity, and abandon when with intimate friends."²

Mme. de Staël's *liaison* with Benjamin Constant had existed then four years when Mme. Récamier made the acquaintance of both of them. The union was soon felt to be a burden to the faithless Benjamin.³ Visionary in love, but practical in business, Mme. de Staël had not neglected her political preoccupations. The end of Robespierre's reign and of the Reign of Terror on the 27th July, 1794 (9th of Thermidor) had given her fresh hope, so that by the close of the year 1794 even, she had published her *Réflexions sur la paix addressées à M. Pitt et aux Français*. She then returned to Paris and once more opened her *salon*. "She was pursuing

¹ See D. Melegari, *Introduction au Journal intime de B. Constant*, and above all Sainte-Beuve, *Portr. Litt.*, Vol. III. *B. C. et Mme. de Charrière* (published in 1844). *Port cont.*, Vol. V. *Un dernier mot sur Benjamin C.* (published in 1845). *Causeries du Lundi*, Vol. XI, on *Adolphe. Benj. C. Son cours de politique constit.* *Nouv. Lundi*, Vol. I. See also the study by Louis de Loménie, which expresses the opinion of the Abbaye-aux-Bois. *Contemp. illustres*, Vol. VIII.

² Quoted by Sainte-Beuve, *Portr. Litt.*, Vol. III, p. 274.

³ See the excellent analysis by M. Albert Sorel, *Mme. de Staël*, p. 52.

the plan of organizing the French Republic on the model of that of the United States.”¹ More than once, and very rightly too, Mme. de Staél’s horror of prejudice has been remarked on, and her practical liberalism, which, while never interfering with her sympathy with Republican ideas, allowed her to receive at her house men of very different origin and opinions. The frequenters of her *salon* were classed according to a certain hierarchy.² This trait should be particularly noted, as we shall find it again in Mme. Récamier, who owed it, perhaps, to her imitation of her illustrious friend.

The *Réflexions sur la paix intérieure* appeared in 1795. It is an appeal for conciliation under the reign of reason and liberty, an invitation to moderation and calm. Certain persecutions, the presage of many others to follow, had induced Mme. de Staél to return to literature pure and simple. She collected her early writings in a volume of *Morceaux détachés*. Watched, although not exiled, by the Directory, she returned to Coppet, and it was from Lausanne that she issued, in 1796, her book *De l’Influence des passions sur le bonheur des individus et des nations*. From this time forth Mme. de Staél was looked upon with suspicion; she was recommended to the zeal of the police. Her affairs, very badly administered by her husband, took a bad turn. She was not able to return to her home in Paris until April, 1797. She received Lucien and Joseph Bonaparte.³ For the conqueror of Italy she at first felt admiration, and soon afterwards fear.⁴ Her father remained for her the great affection of her life. In October, 1797, her daughter Albertine, whom we shall find mentioned later on more than once, was born at Coppet.

Such was, briefly defined and roughly summed up, Mme. de Staél’s moral situation when, at the end of 1798, she began with Juliette Récamier that intimacy which, as we shall see, was so cordial and so fertile. We must remember what the illustrious daughter of Necker was about this time, in order to understand how she won over so quickly and so completely

¹ *Mme. de Staél*, by A. Sorel, p. 59.

² See Sainte-Beuve, *Portraits de femmes*, pp. 107 and 108.

³ A. Sorel, p. 74.

⁴ Joret, article quoted, p. 267.

the gentle, reserved Juliette. It was no doubt in memory of their happy meeting that Mme. de Staél gave her friend, later on, the important manuscript which she had written either during the last months of the year 1798,¹ or at the beginning of 1799. At this time Constant's friend was thoroughly and cordially republican. She wanted to contribute to the formation of manners and customs which should be in accordance with modern and liberal institutions. She demanded the definitive advent of tolerance. Is it rash to fancy that Mme. Récamier, on frequenting this extraordinary woman, at a time when her head was full of all these ideas, should have received a vivid impression? It is our opinion that the new friendship had the most favourable influence over Juliette's mind. She was initiated by Mme. de Staél into a new order of ideas, which had hitherto escaped her. She had a glimpse of occupations and pleasures more attractive than commonplace social distractions. Her shrewd common sense pointed out to her the rôle she might play near to Mme. de Staél, by drawing her inspirations from her without pretending to imitate her, and that liberalism and tolerance which we find later on in Juliette are due to her opportune meeting with her great friend.

Mme. de Staél brought into this intercourse, from the very first, all the magic of her fascinations and all her charm. An anecdote was related about them very soon after this. "Seated one day between Mme. Récamier and Mme. de Staél, two women equally celebrated but in different ways, some one said, 'Here I am between wit and beauty,' 'Monsieur,' answered Mme. de Staél, pretending to misunderstand, 'it is the first time I have heard anyone tell me that I am beautiful.' It seems to me that old Fontenelle, of ingenious memory, scarcely said a more delicate or a shrewder thing."²

Through Mme. de Staél Juliette Récamier was introduced into the literary society of the times.

¹ *Des circonstances actuelles qui peuvent terminer la Révolution et des principes qui doivent fonder la République en France.* MS. of 297 sheets bequeathed to the Bibl. Nat. in 1822 by Mme. Ch. Lenormant. (*Fr. Nouv. acq. 1300 Réserve.*) Referred to and studied by M. Paul Gautier in *La Revue des Deux Mondes*, November 1, 1899.

² E. Géraud, *Un homme de lettres sous l'Empire et la Restauration*, p. 11.

Benjamin Constant cites M. de la Harpe as one of the first men to appreciate Juliette and to understand her the best, and he takes the opportunity to give a portrait of the recently-converted critic, the praise of which is toned down by severe judgments.¹ Baron de Trémont goes further still in this note so full of maliciousness : "La Harpe," he says, "who was very fond of a nice house, presided over by a pretty woman, established himself as habitual guest at Mme. Récamier's and undertook, as he himself said, to direct her mind. An excellent cook made that task a very easy one to him."² Ballanche, on the contrary, according to his touching custom, puts in a kindly word. "It will be remembered," he says, "that M. de la Harpe, after taking so active a part in all the philosophical and literary quarrels of the eighteenth century, was mixed up in the most perilous polemics of the Revolution. As everyone is aware, he learned to know religion when in the dungeons of the Terror. It is well known that he was included in the proscriptions of Vendémiaire and of Fructidor. It is also known that, through another kind of persecution, he was obliged to take refuge at Corbeil in the same retreat in which he had already hidden to escape banishment."³

La Harpe had married, in 1764, a certain Mlle. Monmayeux, the daughter of a lemonade manufacturer. He had applied for and obtained divorce for incompatibility of disposition on the 29th of March, 1793. Mme. Monmayeux died the following year at St. Germain. It is possible that she committed suicide. These dramatic incidents did not prevent La Harpe from marrying on the 9th of August, 1797, at the age of 58, a young girl of twenty three.⁴ It was Mme. Récamier who brought about this union. The bride was the daughter of Mme de Longuerue, a widow without fortune.⁵

"This time," Sainte-Beuve tells us,⁶ "it was the young

¹ *Fragments sur Mme. R.*, pp. 340 and 341.

² P. 403 of the *Notice* described. *Bibl. Nat.*

³ Unpublished *Biographie de Mme. R.*, p. 5.

⁴ Sainte-Beuve, *Causeries du Lundi*, Vol. V, p. 126.

⁵ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 57 and following.

⁶ Article quoted, pp. 126 and 136.

person who demanded the divorce, and who retired after three weeks of conjugal trial, or rather, as people say, of resistance." M. Récamier and La Harpe had a fellow-feeling therefore. The unfortunate critic had been flung into prison in the month of April, 1794.¹ He had become converted to Christianity, hence his polemic with Marie-Joseph Chénier and with the Convention itself.² The *coup d'état* of the 18th of Fructidor (September 4, 1797), struck the neo-royalist the very day after his unfortunate marriage, and obliged him to conceal himself at Corbeil, where Mme. Récamier went to visit him.³ La Harpe at this time made his first efforts in Christian humility. His letters to Mme. Récamier show him to us in this attitude; Sainte-Beuve has quoted one of them,⁴ and after him Mme. Lenormant gave several.⁵ The old critic appears in these to be very much softened by misfortune. His friends, though, were more amused at his conversion than convinced by it. It was the occasion for a mystification, the scene of which was laid in the country-house of Clichy. Mme. Récamier was the inspirer and La Harpe the hero, for he came out of it with honour.⁶ Through La Harpe Mme. Récamier may have known Ballanche at an early date, as he went to Corbeil in 1801 or 1802 to propose to the critic the scheme for an edition of Voltaire.⁷

In literary society, as everywhere else, the epoch of the Directory was a period of transition. Opposing interests and hostile passions came into conflict with each other. Without exaggerating Mme. Récamier's influence, young as she then was to exercise any arbitration, we know that she made use of her prestige for defending and protecting talent from the

¹ Article quoted by Sainte-Beuve, p. 132.

² Sainte-Beuve, p. 134.

³ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 58. Sainte-Beuve (article quoted, p. 135) indicates Colnet's little volume on La Harpe (*Corres. turque*) and gives us a comedy scene in which La Harpe is represented dining "at the house of a rich banker." The whole pamphlet is very spiteful. *Bibl. Nat.*, Ln. 27, 11075.

⁴ Article quoted, pp. 136-137.

⁵ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 58 and following. Ballanche copied them in his unpublished *Biogr. de Mme. R.*, p. 6 and following.

⁶ Sainte-Beuve, article quoted, pp. 137-138; *Souv. et Corr.*, I, pp. 55 and 56.

⁷ Sainte-Beuve, *Portr. contemp.*, II, p. 14.

insolence of people in influential places and the vanity of parvenus. Dupaty, whose audacity and courage are well known,¹ loved to come to her house ; Hoffmann, too, so biting in his repartees, and the waggish Després. Every man sharpened his wit in honour of her. One day she asked Hoffmann whether he were going to the reception of a new Academician. "Oh no, Madame," he replied with the stutter that he knew how to turn to account, "I do not like executions of that kind ; all that I can do in favour of the guilty man is to—to go and see him pass by." Another time Després met, in Juliette's *salon*, an unsuccessful author who was very vain. A manuscript was visible in his pocket : "Take care, my dear fellow," said Després to him, "anyone who does not know you might rob you of that."² As far back as 1797,³ Juliette Récamier was receiving at her house three men who were to become her intimate friends : Lemontey, Camille Jordan and de Gérando. We have already had a glimpse of the former at Mme. Bernard's. Did Juliette really suffer through his scepticism as others may have suffered through his avarice ? We are inclined to think not, as Lemontey, esteemed and made much of by Mme. de Staél, was in the habit, from the time of the Directory, of dining every Saturday, at Mme. Récamier's, and he kept up this custom until his death.⁴

Camille Jordan, a citizen of Lyons, had one of the finest minds of that century. The strength of his political convictions, his courage in giving utterance to them, his passionate love of liberty and his aversion to force, had caused him to be persecuted more than once. He was a Liberal in all the beauty and force of the term.⁵ Mme. de Staél had no dearer friend and no more faithful disciple than the author of the courageous *Rapport sur la police des cultes*, and Mme. de Gérando, in February, 1799, wrote of him : "He has a

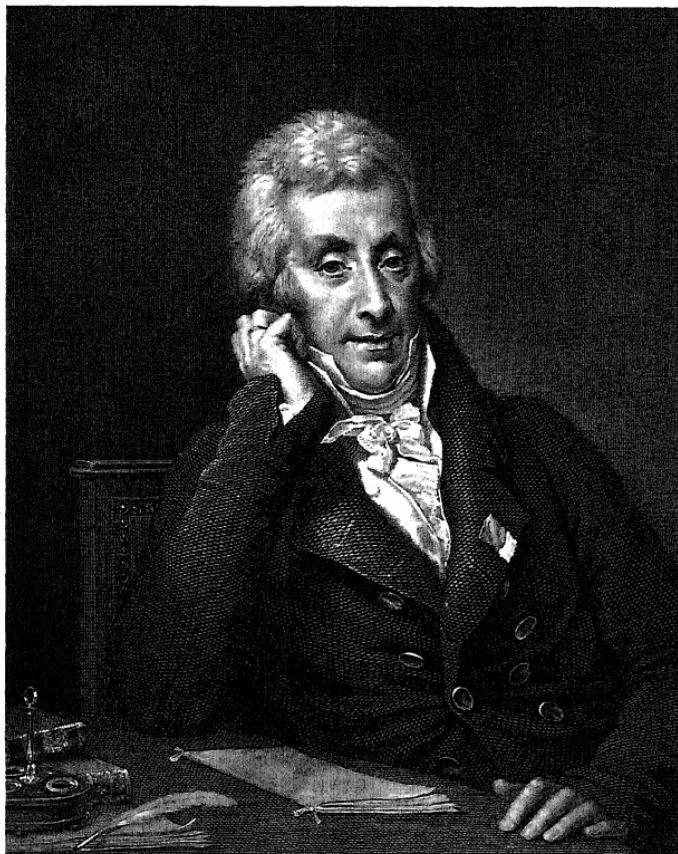
¹ *Relations secrètes des agents de Louis XVIII*, pp. 312-313.

² According to F. Barrière in the *Journal des Débats*, December 2, 1849.

³ See Mme. Lenormant, *Mme. Récamier et les amis de sa jeunesse*, p. 1.

⁴ Mme. Lenormant, *Mme. Récamier et les amis de sa jeunesse*, p. 9.

⁵ See E. Herriot, *Camille Jordan et la Restauration*. (*Revue d'hist. de Lyon*, March-April, 1902.)



Camille Jordan

mixture of penetration and simplicity, of sensitiveness and gaiety; he has a strong mind; he is courageous, virtuous, and ingenuous at the same time, but his ingenuity is that of a child who divines evil without ever having known it. I have never seen a more agreeable man, a man more gentle and more interesting."¹ Jordan had the most manly energy and a delicacy that was quite feminine. He soon became for Juliette a precious counsellor, a tactful confessor. His influence over her blended well with that of Mme. de Staël.

Joseph-Marie de Gérando (or Dégerando) whose nature was less sensitive, and perhaps less refined, was not without merit. After the siege of Lyons he had been obliged, like Camille Jordan, to take refuge in Switzerland, in Italy, and then in Germany. It was in this way that on going to Alsace he had met at Colmar, in 1795, Mlle. Anne de Rath-samhausen. He enlisted as a volunteer in a light-horse regiment in garrison at Colmar. On the 31st December, 1798, he married Marie-Anne, whom we shall meet again more than once, spoken of as Annette. Mme. de Gérando had a very just mind, solid reasoning powers, and a generous disposition. She was passionately devoted to liberty, although the Revolution had ruined her family. She was very well educated, and Mme. de Staël appreciated both her style and her ideas.²

Undoubtedly it was due to these valuable friendships that Juliette Récamier, when about twenty years of age, did not succumb to vulgar coquetry or to commonplace intrigue. Enlightened by the genius of Mme. de Staël, encouraged by the far-seeing affection of a man like Jordan, sustained by the dignity of a Gérando, she soon made up her mind to raise herself to the level of her friends, and to win, by patient education, what she had scarcely been able to find in the *milieu* from which she had sprung. Those who tried to influence her found her from thenceforth armed with self-possession and prudence, very pleasant, but firm as far as her virtue was concerned.

¹ *Lettres de Mme. Degérando*, p. 153.

² See *Lettres de la baronne Degérando*. Introduction.

With a light but gentle hand she put aside that young nephew whose love she transformed into an unswerving friendship. The son of a sister of Jacques Récamier, Paul David, had been sent for by his uncle in July, 1796. He had come to Paris and was employed at the bank. "I was," he tells us, "seventeen years old when I arrived at my uncle's house. His wife, whom he had married a few years previously, was just my age. The friendship with which this accomplished woman has always honoured me dates for both of us from our earliest youth. I was, and I still am, more able than anyone else to appreciate her character, her exquisite qualities and her great virtues. Among all the admirable perfections of this woman, whose beauty was the least of her gifts, must be mentioned in the first rank, the most rigid straightforwardness, the most scrupulous delicacy, and that rectitude of judgment which guided her in all circumstances of her life and made her avoid, from her earliest youth, all the dangers which surrounded a woman who was the constant object of adoration of the most distinguished men of her time."¹

What Paul David does not tell us is that he himself was one of the first to try to touch the heart of the beautiful Juliette, as the following note, addressed to him by her, goes to prove:—

"You are cross, sulky, capricious, and unbearable. I will not have you here to-morrow, but I want you to dine here on Saturday, and as I am your aunt you must obey me."²

Paul David persists, and Juliette writes to him again:—

"My friendship for you cannot change, but you disturb and will entirely spoil one of the friendships which I value most, by trying to find in it what can never be there. Think of me as a sister and you may then be sure of all my friendship and of all my confidence. This poor life of ours is so sad, and your friendship might be very sweet to me and

¹ *Protestation de Paul David.* M. Ch. de Loménié's papers.

² The first of Mme. Récamier's letters to Paul David. M. Ch. de Loménié's papers.

useful, and I cannot tell you how painful it is to me to feel embarrassed with you and to be obliged to talk of indifferent things.”¹

Of course it was easy enough for Juliette to defend herself from this boy’s love. But she was able to resist more skilful attacks than this one. To more dangerous methods of proceeding she opposed other defences. This was one of her arts, and it is wrong to blame her for it. Touched, and perhaps moved, by the expression of sincere love, she freed herself from professional charmers with intelligent skill.

At a dinner at Bagatelle,² Mme. Récamier had made the acquaintance of Lucien Bonaparte. The former shop-assistant of Saint-Maximin, the prisoner of Aix, the husband of Christine Boyer, was at this time in prosperity. The same year was to see him assure the success of the 18th of Brumaire and become Home Minister. His manner of life, even at a time of loose morality, revolted public opinion. The agents of Louis XVIII furnished plenty of scabrous details with regard to his intercourse with Mlle. Georges.³ They went so far as to write⁴:—“Persons who may be credited and who have seen things near enough, affirm that this monster has the women and girls whom his caprice designates quietly kidnapped, and that after having gratified his brutality on them, they are thrown into the Seine by his orders.” Undoubtedly this story is an imaginary one, but it shows at least what the reputation of Lucien was in certain places. It will therefore be understood that Juliette Récamier could, without any cruelty, employ with regard to this Don Juan of evil odour proceedings that were less tender than those practised on young Paul David.

Lucien’s letters to Mme. Récamier would be interesting to read from the beginning to the end, less for their literary value, which is not great, than for their romantic exaltation,

¹ Fourth letter of Mme. R. to Paul David. M. Ch. de Loménie’s papers.

² *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 27 and following. Rondelet, work quoted, pp. 105–106.

³ Work quoted, p. 253.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

which is truly curious in a man who was to contribute so greatly to the 18th of Brumaire.¹ Benjamin Constant quotes one; Chateaubriand reproduces it, declaring it to be rather "worthy of mockery."² Mme. Lenormant gives us various specimens.³ The unpublished *Biographie de Mme. R.* by Ballanche, gives us the opportunity of reproducing two of these letters, several portions of which have never yet appeared elsewhere⁴ :—

“ VENICE, July 29th.

“First letter from Romeo to Juliette.

“Romeo is writing to you, Juliette. If you refuse to read my letter, you will be more cruel than our parents, whose long quarrels have at last abated. These quarrels will certainly never recommence.

“Only a few days ago I merely knew you by reputation. I had caught sight of you a few times in Churches and at fêtes. I knew that you were the most beautiful woman: a thousand lips repeated your praises, but these praises and your attractions had struck without dazzling me. Why has the time of peace delivered me over to your empire? Peace! This is in our families, but disturbance is in my heart.

“Do you remember the day when I was first introduced to you? We were celebrating, at a large banquet, the reconciliation of our fathers. I had just returned from the Senate, where the agitation against the Republic had produced a great impression. My mind was occupied with grave reflections. I arrived, sad and dreamy, in those Bellemare Gardens where we were awaited. Gaiety was tinkling her bells all the time there, and she chased away my sorrows. I gave myself up to that recreation in which skill and calculation are necessary in order to win, an ingenious recreation, the emblem of human life, where everything is encounter, forethought, attack, and pursuit.

¹ These thirty-three autograph letters, belonging probably to the year 1800, and forming a collection of 104 pages, were sold. (See C. L. A. R., No. 20.)

² *M. O. T.*, Vol. IV, p. 384 and following. It is the letter that commences: “Romeo writes to you, Juliette. . . .”

³ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 30 and following.

⁴ The portions printed in italics have been published before.

"You then arrived. Every one around was most attentive to you. 'How beautiful she is!' people exclaimed. The room in which I was soon became deserted, and I had the greatest difficulty to keep the partner with whom I was playing. I refused to go with him and hover around you. It was as though I feared the fate that was awaiting me, and so wished to prolong the last moments of liberty which remained for my heart.

"Fate or love placed me near you and I heard your voice. Your glance, your smile captivated my attentive soul. I was subjugated! I could not sufficiently admire your features, your accents, your silence, your gestures, and that expression which was made more beautiful still by your sweet indifference, for you know how to give a charm to indifference.

"During the evening the crowd filled the Bellemare gardens.¹ Tiresome people, who are to be found everywhere, took possession of me. This time I had neither patience nor affability for them, as they were keeping me away from you. When you appear all glances are your property. The men's eyes admire you and the women's look for some subject of consolation in you and do not find any. From the lake I was watching your way of walking, which is as simple and unaffected as your dress. At each of your movements, with each fold of your gown, it seemed as though flowers were opening."

"I tried to understand what this agitation was which had taken possession of me, and I recognized it as love,² and I wanted to master it by reason. I was carried away and I left when you did³ the Bellemare gardens.

"I saw you again; love seemed to smile on me. One day, seated by the water, still and dreamy, you were plucking the petals from a rose. I was alone with you and I spoke.⁴ I thought I heard a sigh.⁵ Vain illusion! When I had recovered from my mistake I saw indifference with a tranquil brow seated

¹ Chateaubriand : Bedmar.

² Chateaubriand : I knew.

³ Chateaubriand : the scene of those fêtes.

⁴ Lenormant, p. 32, "seated on a round bench, alone with you." Chateaubriand gives the right words.

⁵ Lenormant adds : "Escape from your breast." Chateaubriand : "I heard a sigh."

between us. The passion which dominated me was expressed in my words, and your words gave the agreeable and cruel impression of jesting. My complaints then accompanied my sighs : you doubted Romeo ; you spoke of his art in feigning sentiments that he had not. *Oh, Juliette ! Life without love is nothing but a long sleep.* *The most beautiful of women ought to be sensitive.* Happy the mortal who becomes your chosen friend !!! Romeo is certainly not the one destined for you by love, since he has not been able to inspire you with esteem, since you can accuse him of hypocrisy. Undoubtedly Romeo will only be one victim more offered up by you to indifference. Ah, well, Juliette, Romeo submits to the fate you prepare for him, but do not despise him, do not suspect him of falsehood. Respond to his love by compassionate pity and not by inexorable incredulity.

“Every day I want to see you, as though the arrow were not firmly enough fixed in my heart. The moments when I see you alone are very rare, and these young Venetians who surround you, and talk¹ nonsense and love to you are unendurable to me. Can people talk to Juliette as to other women ?

“I was obliged to write to you. You will know me now and you will no longer be incredulous. My soul is restless and thirsts for affection. If love has not touched your soul, if Romeo is nothing in your eyes but an ordinary man, oh, I beg you by the bonds which you have put upon me to be severe with me now out of kindness. Do not smile on me any longer, do not talk to me, send me away from you. Tell me to go away, and if I can obey² this rigorous but beneficent order, remember at least that Romeo will always love you, that never³ has anyone reigned over him as Juliette does, and that he can never give up living for her, at any rate in memory.”

Another letter.

“Half past eleven at night.

“Thank you, Madame, for your reception this evening : it opened my eyes. I am awake now and I hope to conquer

¹ Chateaubriand : And talk to you.

² Chateaubriand : execute.

³ Chateaubriand : That no one has ever.

myself if you will be indulgent enough to second me. It is a painful effort, but a necessary one ; it will give me back peace or happiness. That up to the evening when, suffocated by tears, I left you, you should have been insensible to the passion with which you have inspired me, I can, without any difficulty, conceive ; you doubted my sincerity. But that since that moment, for which I still blush, you should not have changed towards me, I can only explain this unalterable uniformity by indifference.

“ Yesterday morning I was thinking of my tears and I was indignant with myself. Yesterday evening I was guilty of more tears, and a glance from you, a single word, opened up again in my soul the deep emotion which had been afflicting me. You saw and heard me and you soothed me with that murderous gaiety, that cruel decorum which you call friendship !!! Oh, Juliette, the ordeal is too great, our souls have not met ; all the fire of love is for mine, yours is of ice, and the friendship which you adore is not, in my opinion, a sentiment.

“ To come to the point, Juliette, in the calm moments of my passion this is what I am. This brief examination leads me to the bitter resolution which I have just taken.

“ My soul had braved love until I met you. Since then I have existed for nothing but love. All the good things on earth have been nothing and could be nothing by the side of your love, and my passion has increased to such a degree that I can no longer see you without my soul being oppressed by a sorrowful weight so that I can only sigh. Your gaiety kills me. When you take your hand away my tears come. I am no longer governed by myself but by suffering. I am ill, unhappy. I have never suffered so much. I am like this now you may believe me ; what interest should I have at present in deceiving you ?

“ In this position friendship is nothing to me. Love is the only thing for which my heart yearns. I need love. I need sentiment. But as for you, you are as calm as I am agitated, and this calmness of yours is killing me. Your presence with this calm is hell to me.

“ If I continue seeing you I am lost. A little more emotion

like this of the last two days and I should go mad. I have a character capable of everything. I tremble as I think of myself in the future. I cannot hate you, but I can kill myself.

"I have suffered more this evening than if the most burning fever were agitating me. You have neither pity then nor kindness in place of love? I repeat it, Juliette, you would kill me if your presence had the same effect on me every day, and when you have taken me away from the State, from my family and from my friends you will have some regret. Silence will cover my tomb, but my spirit will hover round you in the silence of the night.

"Oh, Juliette, do not let me see you again or I am lost. I shall be between despair and love if I see you again. I tell you this so that you may consider it your duty to send me away, and after this letter I shall go to the country, which I shall not leave until my tears are dried up. I shall keep myself from thinking of you, and instead I shall have a vast solitude to think of and the perspective of a future ending in despair."¹

Benjamin Constant was, and as a matter of fact we could only expect him to be, very hard as concerns Lucien Bonaparte.² He reproaches him in his attitude toward Juliette Récamier with "a fatuity mingled with assurance and awkwardness." But, and this is curious for us and well worthy of note—he also tries to show us in this adventure Juliette adopting for the first time the tactics, so to speak, which she so often repeated, that is: "touched by the pain she had caused, sorry for the man's emotion, restoring hope without being aware of it, merely by her pity, and destroying it by her carelessness as soon as she had calmed the grief which had called forth this fleeting pity."³ Every word of this definition should be noted; it could not be better expressed, and it gives us Mme. Récamier just as she was.

¹ The text of these two letters is like Ballanche's copy of them. Unpublished *Biogr.*, p. 18 and following.

² *Fragments sur Mme. R.*, p. 346 and following. See, in the book by Jung, Vol. I, from p. 277, Lucien's note, the anecdote of the toast and the attacks on Chateaubriand.

³ P. 348.



Lucien Bonaparte

Chateaubriand understood this so well that when reproducing Benjamin Constant's text he purposely omits the whole passage in which Juliette is cleverly revealed to us.¹ He gives a summary of the rest. Sainte-Beuve, who was so far-seeing, had the same impression as Constant. "Lucien is in love," he says, "he is not repulsed, he will never be welcomed. That is just the shade of difference. It will be like this with all those who are in a hurry, just as with all those who follow. . . . She wanted to put a stop to everything in *April*."²

Juliette did not attempt in any way to make this adventure dramatic. During the winter of 1799-1800 she still went to the fêtes given by Lucien, Minister of the Interior.³ The rejected lover first thought of avenging himself; he then returned quite naturally to his dissipated ways. On the 24th of May, 1803, he contracted a secret and religious marriage with Alexandrine de Bleschamp. The same year he fell in love with several pretty actresses, with Mme. Henri of the Opera, with Jeannette Phillis, and was very much affected, too, by the celebrated Mlle. Georges, who was then about sixteen or seventeen years old.⁴

As a matter of fact, in all Mme. Récamier's history during the time of the Directory we have not found anything which was not to her honour, anything which could justify what has been said about her precocious love of intrigue. It cannot be denied that she fenced well and skilfully against the first attacks of her suitors, but men have also a poorly-justified tendency of taxing as coquetry all that a woman does in the way of putting a check on their self-conceit or their desires. John Lemoinne, in the charming article we have already mentioned in the *Débats*,⁵ evokes, with regard to Mme. Récamier, a legend of the South of France, the story of that beautiful Paule whom on days of popular agitation the magistrates used to beg to appear on her

¹ See *M.O.T.*, Vol. IV, p. 387.

² *Causeries du Lundi*, Vol. I, pp. 127-128. These two pages are delicious; we should like to be able to quote them entirely.

³ *Souv. et Corr.*, Vol. I, pp. 27 to 35.

⁴ *Relations secrètes des agents de Louis XVIII*, pp. 242-243.

⁵ October 27, 1859.

balcony, as the crowd then soon calmed down. "It is thus," he says, "that we picture this young Juliette, appearing with the cortège of her fifteen years in this society, still peopled with the sanguinary ghosts of the Revolution, slender and pink like Diana, white and pure like Cymodoce, only having to show herself for the tears of the unhappy to be dried up, and for the happy to fall at her feet." The comparison is charming, but we must not be deluded by it. So far in our history, Juliette has not been called upon to serve as an umpire; she has scarcely done anything except for herself: she has traversed an epoch fertile in scandal, and come off conqueror each day. Do not let us ask any more from her; the rest will come later on. In 1799, Juliette was only a young woman of twenty-two years of age, but a real woman, as cautious as she was kind, and apt to make up by the delicacy of her intuition for the insufficiency of her education and her culture.

CHAPTER III

GREAT SOCIAL SUCCESSES

(1800—APRIL, 1802)

The masked balls.—Madame Récamier and the 18th of Brumaire.¹—Meeting with Bonaparte (winter of 1799—1800).—Juliette's *salon*; political emigrants and revolutionists; artists, literary men and soldiers: Eugène de Beauharnais, Bernadotte, Masséna, Moreau, Gabriel Legouvé, Fleury Richard.—Adrien de Montmorency; his letters; unpublished account by Benjamin Constant.—Mathieu de Montmorency; his first letters.—Dr. Récamier (1801).—Brillat-Savarin and Juliette's bust.—First interview with Chateaubriand (1801).—Social success: Juliette collects at the Church of St. Roch (Easter, 1801).—Growing intimacy with Mme. de Staél; political rôle of Mme. de Staél; her tendency towards the Opposition; her *salon* in 1802.

SAINTE-BEUVE, recalling his memories of Mme. Récamier at the time of the Consulate, speaks of her as “brilliant, fêté, applauded by everyone, the youngest queen of elegance,” and defines this moment of her life as the “mythological epoch in which she appears to us from afar as a young goddess up in the clouds.”²

Her first triumphs—the easiest of her victories—were in those masked balls at the Opera, the first of which since the Revolution was given February 25th, 1800.³ Under her domino and mask she was very daring, thanks to which fact she had some piquant adventures, one with the Prince of Wurtemberg⁴ who took one of her rings (the free manners

¹ The second month of the calendar of the first French Republic, from October 25 to November 21.

² *Causeries du Lundi*, Vol. I, p. 124.

³ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 82 and following.

⁴ Madame Mohl, in her book on Madame Récamier, tells the story in detail, pp. 28—29.

and customs of the times must be remembered), and another of these adventures was with M. de Metternich. According to Fouché, in his *Mémoires*¹ it was at Mme. Récamier's country-house that Lucien Bonaparte prepared the 18th of Brumaire.² Nothing is more improbable than this. Undoubtedly, and the letters we have quoted are a proof of this, Lucien Bonaparte did talk to Juliette of his political projects and ambitions, for he was not a man likely to avoid making the most of himself, but, beside the fact that the semi-quarrel with Mme. Récamier took place before the preliminaries of the 18th of Brumaire, there was no place for a young woman, who was prudent and, above everything, anxious to please, in the conspiracy that was being organized. Mme. Récamier never had, even later on, any exclusive political opinion. She readily understood that what was allowable in Mme. de Staél, on account of her great talent, would in herself have appeared in bad taste. Her inclinations, as well as the habits and customs of her family, were rather in favour of a liberal royalism.³ With her it was a sentiment rather than an idea, but this sentiment was strong enough to put her on her guard against the ambitions that she saw springing up. Juliette did conspire now and again, but always for the benefit of the weaker party.

Récamier had various business affairs with the new government.⁴ We see, for instance, that by virtue of a decision arrived at by the Consuls on the 7th of Messidor of the year VIII, the citizens, Récamier and Germain, were to pay into the Public Treasury "800,000 francs in specie and 526,000

¹ Vol. I, p. 120.

² Touchard-Lafosse holds the same opinion (*Souvenirs d'un demi-siècle*, VI, p. 369). Lucien Bonaparte is said to have gathered at Bagatelle, Chazal, Boulay de la Meurthe, Cabanis, Emile Gauzin, &c.

³ See the article by Albert Sorel on *Bonaparte et les royalistes au début du Consulat* (*Revue Bleue*, June 21, 1902). See also in the *Revue Bleue*, June and August, 1900, April and following numbers 1902, the papers by Gilbert Stenger on *La Société sous le Consulat*.

⁴ About Récamier's rôle see *Les Finances du Consulat*, by René Stourm (Paris, Guillaumin, 1902). On the 3rd of Frimaire of the year VIII, Bonaparte called together at the Luxembourg the chief bankers of Paris. Récamier was present at this assembly. He adhered to the project of subscription for a loan of twelve millions in specie, a project proposed by the Minister of Finance (pp. 56 and 57). Everyone knows that the bankers, after promising, only gave three millions (p. 58).

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francs in assignments of the year VII on taxes, which amounts, the total of which was 1,326,000 francs, were to be repaid them by the Treasury on the proceeds of the war subvention granted in the year VIII.¹ Juliette did not attempt to turn this situation to account. She only spoke to Napoleon once in her life ; it was at that fête at Lucien's, in the winter of 1799-1800, at which Mme. Lenormant depicts her dressed in white satin, with pearls on her neck and arms. In the absence of Mme. Lucien Bonaparte, Elisa Bonaparte, who had only recently married Felice Pasquale Bacciochi, and was to be Grand Duchess of Tuscany, received the guests. Napoleon made a few more or less discreet remarks to Mme. Récamier. He alluded to Lucien's sentiments. At table he was not placed at her right, through some mistake, but after dinner there was music, and Bonaparte found an opportunity of saying a few words to Juliette which were by no means original. This was the only interview they ever had.² It is no doubt to this soirée that Sainte-Beuve alludes.³ According to him, Bonaparte said in a joke to Cambacérès, Juliette's neighbour at table : " Well, Consul Cambacérès, you are always with the prettiest woman ! "

Mme. Récamier's *salon* became more and more frequented, and was graced all the time by fresh guests. The mistress of the house grew more celebrated day by day, and kept up the character of tactful neutrality for which her receptions were famed. To the illustrious persons whom we have already met were added⁴ Christian de Lamoignon, the last representative of a noted family ; Count Louis de Narbonne, who returned to Paris in 1800 ; Eugène de Beauharnais, who was then twenty years old ; Bernadotte, on his return from his Vendean mission ; Masséna, who had not, any more than Bernadotte, approved of the 18th of Brumaire ; Moreau, whose intimacy with Mme. Récamier was to have important consequences ; and, among literary men, Legouvé.

The few fragments which remain to us of the letters

¹ *National Archives*, Minutes of the decrees, A. F., IV⁸⁵.

² *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 39.

³ *Causeries du Lundi*, I, pp. 128 and 129.

⁴ See *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 39.

addressed by these men, all celebrated in different ways, to Mme. Récamier, show us the sincerity of their admiration for her. There is a letter from Eugène de Beauharnais, confessing to Juliette that he has taken a ring of hers and begging that he may be allowed to keep it. "I have made a cruel mistake," he declares, "My just complaints are permissible. May they reach you and will you be kind enough, Madame, to ease the fate of him who is sincerely attached to you."¹ We shall meet with Bernadotte and Moreau again later one. With Masséna it is not a question of a ring, but of a piece of ribbon. In a letter, the future Prince of Essling says to Juliette : "The charming ribbon given by Madame Récamier was worn by General Masséna at the battles of the blockade of Genoa. The General has never been without it, and it has constantly brought about the victory."²

The poet, Gabriel Legouvé, the happy author of *La Mort d'Abel*, the graceful singer of *La Mélancolie*, he who in 1801 was to obtain the most marked success with his poem on the *Mérite des femmes*, addressed, about this time, a long epistle in verse "to Mme. Récamier, who said she would share no other sentiment than that of friendship." It is in the taste of the times. The painter, Fleury Richard, was also received at Mme. Récamier's. He was born at Lyons too, and the same year that she was born. His vocation had been "decided by a kind glance from a young girl."³ Richard, in the year 1796, had gone to David's school. He was not devoid of originality and had wanted to give up the Grecian and Roman styles for Gothic. Looking one day at the St. Denis monuments, collected then at the Museum of the Petits-Augustins and trying to understand the epitaphs, he was struck by the profound feeling contained in the few words carved on the tomb of Valentine of Milan. "Nothing is any more to me, more is nothing to me!" Richard found in this inscription the *motif* for a picture. His Valentine of Milan obtained great success at the *Salon*, and from thenceforth he became

¹ Fragment given by the C.L.A.R., No. 10.

² Fragment given by the C.L.A.R., No. 81.

³ Autobiography, MS. Library of the City of Lyons, MS. 1647 (1625).



Bernadotte

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acquainted with distinguished artists and savants. Natives of Lyons living in Paris sought him out. Fleury Richard was received as a friend by the Récamier family and at the same time introduced to the beautiful Mme. Regnaud de St. Jean d'Angély, to the Duchesse d'Abrantès and to the Duchesse de Raguse. "Mme. de Stael, herself," he writes, "said, looking at my picture: —‘Richard with his *Valentine* has made for himself a European reputation like Lamartine with his *Méditations* and his *Harmonies*.’"¹

But these accidental friendships, which Mme. Récamier owed to the open hospitality of her *salon*, cannot be compared to the deep attachment which from this time forth, the winter of 1799—1800, existed between her and the two cousins, Adrien and Mathieu de Montmorency, who themselves had the greatest affection for each other.

Adrien de Montmorency was the first to be admitted as an intimate friend.² He was ten years older than Juliette and Lamartine, who knew him, has given us a portrait of Anne-Adrien de Montmorency which is all in praise of him: "He did not make any show of wit, as he was absolutely devoid of all pretension; but he was just and moderate, and as considerate as his heart was kind and true."³ Physically he was slender and graceful, but he was very short-sighted and had a slight impediment in his speech,⁴ which undoubtedly caused him the fits of awkwardness sometimes visible in spite of his distinction. As to his mental faculties, he had a keen intelligence, his imagination was more prompt than his reason, he was inflexible with regard to honour and, with all this, a touch of variableness, of fickleness rather, animated him. Sainte-Beuve, who was so just and shrewd an observer, has noted very exactly the precise shades of this character, the merits of which were not perceptible to Chateaubriand. He describes him as witty,⁵ an excellent friend, with a delicacy that amounted to refinement. This portrait of him does not

¹ Autobiography, MS. Lyons Library, MS. 1647 (1625), p. 6. (Is it necessary to point out the naive anachronism contained in this sentence?)

² *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 41.

³ *Cours de Littérature*, Vol. IX. p. 92.

⁴ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 41.

⁵ *Causeries du Lundi*, XIV, p. 312 and following.

require any touching up and it is thus that we shall see the charming nature of this Duc de Laval gradually define itself.

The first letters of Adrien de Montmorency to Mme. Récamier are very tender. "I am just starting for Dampierre," he writes, "and the idea of putting several miles and several days between you and me is so bitter to me, that I beseech you to give it a moment's thought."¹ Again he says: "Be generous and let me have a word telling me whether I dare hope to see you again to-day. The torture of having vexed you is unbearable. If your soul is sensitive and noble it must love to forgive. It seems as though you have only been ill in order to punish me more, and to add great anxiety to great grief. The last time I was with you I saw your tears flowing for the victims: you will have heard how much I am affected personally by these misfortunes. Let me come and mourn with you. Do let me see you for a minute. I am asking you in sorrow and repentance."² Some of the letters are still more passionate and ardent, as for instance the one below, the abrupt style of which is expressive of deep feeling: "I am wretched at not finding you and hope to see you this evening. I have great need of this, and if you do not refuse me I shall be most grateful to you. With my most affectionate homage."³ Condemned by Juliette to banishment, no doubt on account of the persistency of his demands, he protests and complains as follows: "Is what you are doing merciful? I dare not speak, but I am sure that your penetration divines what I must and will say to you. I beg you to send me a word in reply at once. If I might see you for a moment during the morning I would thank you all my life."⁴ Adrien de Montmorency must have been very deeply affected, for neither wounded pride, the sense of his

¹ Unpublished letter, dated only the 8th of Floréal. M. Ch. de Loménié's MSS.

² Unpublished letter with no other date than Tuesday the 18th.

³ Unpublished letter in M. Ch. de Loménié's MSS. with no date and no other address than Madame Récamier. In another letter: "I appeal to those kind feelings, which sometimes escape from your inflexible heart, for the favour of being allowed to go and pay my homage to you."

⁴ Unpublished letter in M. Ch. de Loménié's MSS. dated Thursday morning. In another letter: "I beseech you, I beg you with tears in my eyes to let me see you for a single instant, at some moment of the day. I await your reply in fear and trembling."

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importunity, nor anything else can stop him : "It is not," he writes, "that I am sensitive about the humiliation of being refused, I laid all my pride at your feet a long time ago."¹ He was absolutely dependent on Juliette, submissive to all her caprices and resigned to her severity. "I will obey your orders," he tells her, "I will not go to that place, so extolled now on account of your beautiful presence there. I will sacrifice the pleasure of seeing you being looked at and admired by an immense crowd to the severe consolation of having obeyed you."² Juliette did not reply to any of these letters³ and, according to her principle, waited patiently for the time when this violent love would be converted into fervent friendship.

It is to the affectionate Adrien de Montmorency (the study of the original leaves no doubt about it) that a letter published⁴ as having been written by Chateaubriand must be attributed. It does all honour to Juliette, who received it, for, as well as being a fresh protestation of affection, it expresses gratitude for a kind action :—

“ Morbihan, Auray, 22nd Vend[émaï]re.

“ I have just received a letter from M. de Léon which fills me with gratitude to you. He and all his family have received their notice of amnesty. I do not doubt but that your auspicious and beautiful influence has contributed in bringing about this benefit, thanks to the steps that your kind heart prompted you to take, with a graciousness and warmth never to be forgotten.

“ You have given me the opportunity of experiencing the greatest pleasure a soul with any delicacy can have; the happiness of rendering a service to friends. I do homage to you for all that I felt and I beg you to accept my homage with that kindness which induced you to move in the

¹ Unpublished. No date. M. Ch. de Loménie's MSS.

² Unpublished letter in M. Ch. de Loménie's MSS., dated Sunday morning.

³ “ You have sometimes said a few kind words to me; you have never deigned to write me any.” Unpublished letter of Adr. de M. in M. Ch. de Loménie's collection.

⁴ In the *Nouvelle Revue*, 1896, Vol. 98, p. 281.

natter. I am here, 120 leagues away from you, talking to peasants who cannot speak French, on land which has been covered with blood by the fury¹ of civil war. Your situation and² your extreme youth have spared you all these melancholy memories. To-morrow I shall ride as far as Quiberon and give myself up to these thoughts.

“ You, who have caused me to feel so many different sentiments : you, whom I have so many reasons for loving and, I might venture to say, for hating : you, whom I do not yet know, because I know you too well, I beg you not to forget me. I have seen your tears flow ; and those tears on a face such as yours seemed to me by their avowal and their intimacy the most touching sight possible. In a few days I shall return to Paris. If you read my letter with the kind part of your heart you will send me just a line to Rue St. (Dominique). You will tell me whether you are in Paris and whether I may call at once to see you.

“ Adieu ! I respect your character and my own too much to believe that our *liaison*³ could ever be lowered into a vulgar friendship.”⁴

Precious as such letters are to us, there is something better still. With the indications of Madame Récamier, without our being able to fix precisely the limits of this collaboration, Benjamin Constant wrote with his own hand an account which has never been published, and which may be considered as a little master-piece of delicate psychology. We give it here just as the author of *Adolphe* probably submitted it to Juliette Récamier :—“ As one of the characteristics of her mind,” says Benjamin Constant, “ is to observe herself with admirable shrewdness and to describe herself with a grace that no one has ever equalled, instead of limiting myself to facts, which would be nothing without the details and all the little shades, I will let her speak herself and I will report her own story of what was going on much more within her own heart

¹ Not *horrors*, as in the published text.

² Not *in*, as in the published text.

³ The word *friendship* is written over it.

⁴ Addressed : Madame Récamier, No. 4, Rue du Mont-Blanc, Paris.
The original belongs to M. Boubée of Lyons.

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than outside:—‘Lucien Bonaparte had given up seeing me. He had sent back my letters and did not write to me any more. The sight of his agitation, of his despair, and his tears being no longer before my eyes, my imagination was no longer stirred nor my pity excited by them. The accounts which I heard of him, consoling himself with vulgar pleasures and with the enjoyments of ambition, finally made me forget him altogether. Other things which came to my hearing proved to me that he had avenged himself in a way that was not very worthy of him, and that the public was guilty of unkindness and of transient but unjust error. All this gave me an increased timidity and an aversion to everything which would make people talk of me. But at the same time this passionate language which I had heard so long, this idea of a man entirely engrossed with thoughts of me, these memories of love which, without ever having any relation to the person, were concerned with the sentiment itself and with the idea which might have been the object of it, had put into my soul a certain need of emotion which, finding nothing to satisfy itself, often produced dreaminess and sadness. I read novels and found in these novels Lucien’s conversations, but purer and nobler, freed from the trivial style which disfigured his, from those far-fetched expressions which made them sound false and from that violence which, to me, was a matter of terror rather than interest. I chose novels in which this sentiment was fought and subdued by duty. We ought not to imagine that these novels are the least dangerous ones. They accustom the mind to delight in the combats which love and virtue are seen to wage. Sorrow appears to us not only a pledge of innocence, but a title for esteem, and what the heart may gain in delicacy the imagination may also acquire in exaltation. We may affirm that in this way *La Princesse de Clèves* is a thousand times more dangerous than *La Nouvelle Héloïse*.

“The summer was drawing to a close, and I returned to Paris. M. R[écamier]’s business affairs were getting more and more extensive, so that his house became one of the most brilliant in Paris. His acquaintances and mine increased in number, so that I was in the midst of splendour and fêtes of

all kinds all the time. The result of this was great frivolity in my life and a melancholy just as great in all my thoughts. I did not regret the pleasure of love, but I regretted its pain. It seemed to me that my heart was made to love and to suffer, and, as I loved nothing and only suffered from indifference, I considered that I was foregoing my destiny.

“I met one day at the house of Mme. de Staél a man with one of the best names in France. He was distinguished-looking, he conversed lightly and agreeably, he had a certain nobility of manner and pride of race. He had that gentle kind of affability which makes people recognize the claims which it indicates without forcing them on anyone. His mind was more cultured than is usual in the average society man, he took an interest in everything with that politeness which shows that it is out of complaisance and with that moderation which prevents the interest from becoming wearisome. Adrien de Montmorency, for that was his name, was placed next me at table. My face appeared to strike him, and he asked if he might call on me. He came the following day. Every word, look, and movement, and even his way of talking, indicated a slight disturbance of mind, the confused feeling caused by a preference that has just come into existence. There was nothing romantic, nothing passionate mingled with it. The tone of French society is the opposite from that of novels. Expression has something violent, and, so to speak, uncouth, which appears as a lack of taste to those who have concentrated all their existence in accepted conventionalisms. All that I remembered of Lucien turned now to the advantage of M. de M. The revolutionary origin of the one contrasted with the antique illustriousness of the other. The unruly agitation of the former made the animated reserve of the latter more fascinating. Love, or at least a reciprocal attraction, made itself felt, unaccompanied by anything alarming. It was like a transparent cloud that one could not dread, because it seemed ready to be dispelled.

“My interviews with M. de M. became rather frequent, but they nearly always took place when others were there. A kind of confidence and a habit of seeing each other were established. This had no reference to anything intimate, but it

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took for granted an intimacy which did not exist and had a certain charm by its vagueness and by the very uncertainty of this supposition. If, by chance, we happened to meet at any special place, we went there to meet again afterwards without mentioning it to each other. We each appreciated in the other this silence and intelligence. That mystery which, in ordinary intercourse, is put between one's self and the rest of the world, was between us two, and it cast over our intercourse a sweet and agreeable vagueness.

“Whilst enjoying the sort of calm which characterized our intercourse, I should have liked more passion. It seemed to me that neither he nor I were unhappy enough. He was as delicate and distinguished looking as the Duc de Nemours, but much less sad. I was as scrupulous and as reserved as the Princesse de Clèves, but I neither suffered nor struggled as she did. I admired the serene sky, but a few little storms would have been of value.

“As we saw each other much more in society than alone, our sentiment beautified the crowd more than it made us wish to be alone together. M. de M. was constantly proving to me that he did nothing but think of me. When I was dancing he was always in the front row of the spectators, or if he had not been able to get a place there, thanks to his tall figure I could always see his fair hair beyond, when I looked past the first row. Between the dances we always found each other in one of the rooms near, through which the various idlers were strolling. We talked for a minute or two, and the interruptions we had made these conversations, which had never been planned, all the more enjoyable.

“It is generally believed that solitude is favourable to sentiment, society is just as favourable. That indifferent multitude upon which the heart can never count, which seems to shun us when we go to it in search of sympathy or support; these fêtes at which the pomps and vanities of life remind us of the emptiness of it all and make us think of the *néant*; that noise which, when it does not distract our thoughts, adds to the emotion we are feeling; that sight of the object of our preference, who becomes so much more a part of ourself because no one divines this mysterious affinity, the comprehension which

is established without being foreseen or mentioned, the glances which say all the more because they have only a moment for expressing the thing they want to say, the constraint itself which adds to the intensity of what one feels and of what one hides by pressing all into a more limited space and into a more fleeting time, all these things have more seduction in them than the liberty of the country and the effusions of solitude. It is rare that in long conversations there are not some points about which hearts are not in touch with each other. Society is an obstacle to this discovery. We imagine we suffice to each other because we can only give little, but the insufficiency comes from outside and not from ourselves, and everything seems to be contained in what one has to leave to be guessed. It is like music as compared to speech, music says everything by a sound and its effect is greater because it is more vague. Speech does not have this effect, because it has more development at its command.

“‘ M. de M. experienced this impression still more than I did. He liked to accompany me to the theatre and to appear in public with me. The enthusiasm that I excited, the approval that my face obtained, the murmur of praise to be heard through the crowd, the attention given to the fortunate companion of a person so much remarked, flattered his pride. His attachment had not made him indifferent to the amusements and pleasures to which he had been accustomed from his youth. My presence gave more charm to them, but he preferred them to solitude. The same thing would probably have happened for me if it had been the other way round. Neither he nor I were passionate enough to feel the need of being alone together, and if he asked me for this I should probably have thought this desire (?) embarrassing and the request inconvenient. I thought it odd, though, that he should desire it so little, that he should not take advantage of what chance gave us, and that he should propose to interrupt our *tête-à-tête* in order to go together to some ball or concert. I was annoyed that we had so few secrets to tell each other that we could tell them anywhere, and I was impatient at the thought that our reciprocal taste for each other’s society should remain so much beneath the depth and dignity of a veritable passion.

“ ‘ I made up for it by exaggerating when alone the inclination I felt. I expected M. de M. at my house when I knew that he was wishing for me elsewhere. I reproached him inwardly for not coming, then I reproached myself for expecting him, and I imagined dangers for the sake of feeling terror. I blamed myself for having scruples. I imagined struggles in order to experience agitation, and in this way I managed to inspire myself with something that slightly resembled remorse. I very soon took advantage of this to introduce into our intercourse those difficulties and those sorrows which sooner or later ought to belong to it. I suddenly closed my doors to M. de M., and I had the satisfaction of suffering very much, more even than I should have dared to hope. I praised myself all the more for this heroic resolution. At last I was like the Princesse de Clèves ; I had fought and conquered. I had sacrificed my inclination to duty ; I was sad, cast down, melancholy, and M. de M. absent was no longer very different from the Duc de Nemours.

“ ‘ This unexpected rupture surprised and grieved him. It interfered with his habits ; it wounded his affection, which, without being violent, was nevertheless sincere. It deprived him of agreeable society and of the kind of success he had in the eyes of everyone through the preference that he appeared to have won. He regretted me for his own sake, for my sake, and for the sake of the public.

“ ‘ After trying in vain to break through the barrier which I had put between us he applied to Mme. de S(tael) who, always favourable to passion when she is not jealous of it, took him under her wing and brought him to my house without telling me beforehand.

“ ‘ It was quite an event, this order evaded, this forcing of the door, and the object of an inclination, which I had been glorifying in solitude, penetrating into my presence in spite of my efforts. I was very much affected by it, and the attention I gave to my agitation, the comparison of my sensations with those that the situation ought to cause, increased this agitation of the sentiment that I thought I ought to feel very much. M. de M. noticed all this, and interpreted it more in his own favour than the reality, closely examined, would

have warranted. He spoke in a graceful way, pitied himself with a certain amount of emotion, moderation and with great delicacy. I enjoyed this episode that I had brought about, without owning it to myself and it gave, at last, to my intercourse with M. de M. the interest of difficulty, suffering and enthusiasm.

“‘We continued to meet, but we soon returned to our former ways. We came down from the heights on which my severity had placed us and where our sentiment could not keep us, and we returned to the smooth, agreeable, but monotonous path which I had wanted to quit for an instant.

“‘My scruples returned : I imagined that I was blaming myself for loving too much and I was blaming myself in reality for not loving enough. I was cavilling with my heart for its raptures, whilst what really weighed on me was its indifference. A rupture had not succeeded, and I tried a voyage. My mother’s health had caused her doctors to recommend her to go to some watering-place. I proposed that she should go to England and try the Bristol waters. She consented, and I announced my plan. I had the pleasure of hearing M. de M. complain about it, and also the pleasure of feeling a certain amount of grief on hearing his reproaches, and on resisting his entreaties I even saw him get angry. That was a fine moment for me, and when he said that his good wishes would not go with me, that he hoped I should have some misfortunes, that he was hoping for a storm for the ship that was to take me, I was deeply grieved and consequently delighted.’ This (says Benjamin Constant) is the end of Juliette’s story, and we will now go on again with our own.”¹

Undoubtedly we must not accept this clever narration word for word. Careful though the author is to attribute it to Juliette, we can trace in it the hand of the experienced romance writer who remembers both the *Précieuses* and the *Princesse de Clèves*. The correspondence of Adrien de Montmorency with Juliette will tell us better than any other document the story of that long intimacy, which had only just commenced at the time of which we write.

¹ Written by B. C. Unpublished MS. in M. Ch. de Loménié’s collection, *Lettres, portraits et journal de Constant*.

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As to Mathieu-Jean-Félicité de Montmorency, whose place in Mme. Récamier's affection was not to be any less great, he was quite a different kind of man from Adrien. In the first place he was older, as he was born in 1760,¹ and had already had a rôle in history. He had made his first campaign in America in his father's regiment. He had been the companion of men such as Lafayette, Lauzun, Ségur and, like these young men, had become a Liberal. In 1789 he had been nominated Member of the States-General by the bailiwick of Montfort-l'Amaury. The most noble Seigneur of France had made common cause with the Tiers-État, which had resulted for him in the attacks and hatred of the thorough royalists. At the National Assembly, August 1st, 1789, Mathieu de Montmorency, who was only a Count then, had demanded that the "Rights of man should be declared before the Constitution," as he said, "the Constitution is only the result, the end of that declaration." "Truth leads to happiness," he exclaimed in his speech, "should we be here if the lights of wisdom had not dispersed the gloom which hung over our horizon?"² On the 5th of August it was he who read the decree passed at the sitting of the previous evening, the first article of which abolished for ever feudal servitude.³ During the sitting of the following day, at the end of the discussion, he declared with energy : "There is neither any motion nor any amendment to be made ; it is a sentiment of patriotism which inclines nobles and ecclesiastics to make sacrifices. It is only a question of receiving them, there is no need to deliberate three days about accepting a benefit."⁴ On the 18th of August he became Secretary to the National Assembly.

During the sitting of June 19th, 1790, M. de Montmorency, after the Abbé Maury, protested once more as to the ardour with which he must "always share the great and eternal principles" consecrated by the Declaration of Rights, and he then pronounced these words, which it is well to remember, as we shall later on see quite another Montmorency : "I ask that

¹ July 10th in Paris (*Sour. et Corr.*, I, p. 42).

² *Parliamentary Archives*, 1st series, Vol. VIII, p. 320.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 352 and following.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 354.

in this day of general annihilation, of anti-social distinctions which, vain and puerile though they may be, are contrary to your principles, the Assembly should not spare one of the signs which recall the most the feudal system and the knightly spirit: that all the arms and armorial bearings shall be abolished; that all Frenchmen shall wear from henceforth the same ensigns, those of liberty, which shall from henceforth be blended with those of France.”¹

The Comte de Montmorency spoke of the flight of the King. He supported the motion of Alexandre de Lameth, who demanded in this circumstance the assembly of the Military Committee.² But what marked him out more than all his other speeches for the gratitude of Mme. de Staél,³ was his attitude during the discussion of August 27, 1791, on the subject of the honours which the Assembly wished to render to Rousseau. It was on a proposition by Mathieu de Montmorency that the following decree was adopted: “The National Assembly decrees that J. J. Rousseau is worthy of the honours decreed to great men by the grateful country and that the means of carrying them out are entrusted to the Constitutional Committee.”⁴

Unfortunately the deputy of the nobility of the Montfort l’Amaury bailiwick was not to keep this spirit of Liberalism very long. The Comte de Rivarol, who had taken upon himself to act as flatterer to those who moved in the higher ranks of society, reserved a place for him in his celebrated *Petit Almanach de nos grands hommes* (1788). Mathieu was also violently attacked in the *Actes des Apôtres*⁵ and in the *Journal général de la cour et de la ville*.⁶ “It is said,” announced this paper, “that Mme. de L. often amused herself by learning the *Rights of man* in her ante-chamber, and that

¹ *Parliamentary Archives*, 1st series, Vol. XVI, p. 375 and following.

² Sitting of June 21, 1791, *Parliamentary Archives*, 1st series, Vol. XXVII, p. 368.

³ *Les Lettres sur les écrits et le caractère de J. J. Rousseau* are of the year 1788.

⁴ *Parliamentary Archives*, Vol. XXIX, 1st series, p. 761. See the résumé of the interventions of M. de Montmorency, pp. 532 and 533 of the *Table gen. alph. de L’Ass. nat. const.* Paris, Dupont, 1889.

⁵ See Hatin, *Histoire de la Presse*, Vol. VII, p. 36.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

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she often took lessons from a lackey who had an excellent constitution, and who is the father of little Matth. . . . Therefore it is not surprising that he should have voted on the 19th of June for the suppression of liveries; filial piety inspired him with this idea." These low attacks did not affect Mathieu de Montmorency; but the years 1793 and 1794, which cost the life of his young brother, the Abbé de Laval, had a great influence over him, made him turn aside from the advanced party and inclined him towards religion. After the 10th of August he went away to Coppet, where Mme. de Staél then was. He returned to France in 1795, was arrested on the 26th of December of that year, and again disturbed about the 18th of Fructidor, 1797. He then gave up active politics, and gradually his Liberalism vanished. This crisis of conscience was related in praise of Mathieu by de Gérando in 1826. It caused the Liberals to lose a man of medium intellect but of the highest moral worth; it brought about, on the other hand, the friendship of the two cousins, Adrien and Mathieu.

Later on, Adrien de Montmorency, at the request of Mme. Récamier, wrote a political biography of Mathieu. He tells in this the origin of his cordial friendship with his cousin. "A few weeks," he writes, "before the 18th Fructidor, 1797, I met Mathieu by the Lake of Bienne, a solitary place in which his mother had taken refuge after escaping the horrors and dangers of the revolutionary prisons. We had each of us lost a brother; his had perished on the scaffold; my brother, Achille, had received six shots on the battle-field in Condé's army and had died of his wounds. We both of us felt the need of filling an empty place in our heart, and first-cousins as we already were, Mathieu and I, we were not long in becoming like brothers. This name is full of delight as Montaigne says, 'and on this account we made our alliance with it.' In this retreat and before returning to France, he made that noble and loyal declaration of political principles to me, which is given in so touching a manner in his will. He even charged me to make it known to our Princes if I ever had the opportunity."¹

¹ Unpublished notice by Adrien de Montmorency. M. Ch. de Loménie's MSS.

It was no doubt Adrien de Montmorency who introduced Mathieu to Juliette.

The first letters from Mathieu de Montmorency to Mme. Récamier refer to various charities. It is first "a poor German Baroness" to whom Juliette is asked to give again.¹ Then it is an Abbess whose "dribbling debts" must be paid so that she may return to her little farm which is threatened with seizure.² Another time it is a former life-guardsman to whom Mme. Récamier had for a long time given 12 francs a month and who begged for this help again.³ De Gérando was often Mathieu's intermediary with her whom he called "the prettiest woman in Paris."⁴ This association in charitable works permitted Mathieu to veil under the name of esteem the tender and respectful love which he felt for Juliette.⁵ Very soon his ambitions were limited to making his friend happy. He advises her to "make a firm resolution." He is sincerely troubled about her virtue, and this mystic, touched by grace, wants to interest her in active work and asks her quite seriously to collaborate in a book on the Sisters of Charity. On reading Mathieu's letters to Mme. Récamier one cannot help thinking of the speeches of Alceste to Célimène. He begs her to give up the futilities with which she is surrounded, to read and to reflect, to determine her life after a definite examination of her conscience, not to be discouraged, but to persevere in the good way. In 1810, writing to a melancholy woman who is inclined to welcome social distractions by way of consolation, he again gives her the same advice.⁶ In the same way Pascal, about 1656, wrote to Mlle. de Roannez those letters full of the thoughts of a St. Marc or a St. Augustin, advising her to watch and pray in order to avoid this world's evils. But Charlotte de Roannez already felt the religious vocation. On the 4th of August, 1656, she had been to the Church of Port Royal and had made this prayer: "Oh God, if you would touch my heart so that I might become a nun and only serve you, I

¹ Letter No. 1 of M. de Montmorency's collection. M. Ch. de Loménie's MSS.

² Letter No. 2.

³ Letter No. 3.

⁴ Letter No. 4.

⁵ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 46 and following.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 49 and following.

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should be very happy ; but, oh God, touch me with a grace so powerful that I cannot resist it and that religion shall win the day ; for it must be with me like that, otherwise the world would hold me back for ever.”¹

Disheartened though Juliette Récamier sometimes was, she was never destined to make a prayer of this kind. Her piety, which became rather fervent towards the close of her life, was for a long time very lukewarm. In the greatest crisis of her life she thought, it is only fair to say it, of suicide, but not of the cloister. Mathieu’s rôle with regard to her was therefore all the more delicate. “This virtuous *grand seigneur*,” as Guizot says, “fell in love with Mme. Récamier with a pious and sheltering passion which, during twenty-six years, was a serious and fascinating preoccupation, although at times it was torture to him, whilst for her it was a sweet and salutary protection. He loved her as a lover, respected her as a brother, and watched over her like a tender and anxious spiritual director. . . . ”²

J. Lemoinne is just as shrewd in his observation : “Ballanche,” he writes, “loved her as he would have loved Beatrice ; Chateaubriand loved her as a Psyche in whom he looked at himself ; Mathieu de Montmorency behaved like the Duc de Nemours to the Princesse de Clèves : it was the same respect, the same adoration, the same polite and reserved tenderness.”³

In 1801, Dr. Récamier, the cousin and fellow-citizen of the banker, came to Paris to live. He was a man of great scientific knowledge, to whom Juliette more than once had recourse.⁴ She was also related to Brillat-Savarin. The mother of the celebrated gastronomist was the beautiful

¹ See Bl. Pascal, *Opuscules et Pensées*. Edit. L. Brunschvieg. Paris. Hachette, p. 208.

² Guizot, p. 519, article quoted above.

³ *Débats*, November 24, 1859. See a charming passage in Sainte-Beuve, *Causeries du Lundi*, I, pp. 129 and 130.

⁴ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 333. See also *Récamier et ses contemporains* (1774-1852). *Étude de l’Histoire de Médecine aux dix-huitième et dix-neuvième siècles*, by Paul Triaire (Paris, Baillière, 1899, in —8°). Dr. Récamier had a son, Etienne, who went to the bar and, towards the end of the Second Empire, founded the paper *Le Français*. M. Etienne Récamier, born in 1834, died in 1893 at Jerusalem. See the notice by M. Thureau-Dangin (Nancy, Berger-Levrault, 1894, in —8°).

Claudine-Aurore Récamier; in memory of her, her son gave to a certain square pasty the name of "The beautiful Aurore's pillow."¹ Jean-Anthelme Brillat-Savarin was born at Belley, April 2nd, 1755. He came to represent his co-citizens at the Constituent Assembly,² and then entered the magistracy. He very much admired his beautiful cousin, as an anecdote told by him in his *Physiologie du goût*³ goes to prove. He rendered her more than one service and offered her more than one homage.

Finally, and above all, it was in 1801 that the first meeting between Mme. Récamier and Chateaubriand took place at the house of Mme. de Staél.⁴ A long time afterwards, when he had become Juliette's inseparable friend, to the point of sacrificing for her the greater part of his dearest love souvenirs, Chateaubriand wrote about this interview an account full of grace and delicacy.⁵ "I was at Mme. de Staél's one morning," he says; "she received me in her room, and Mlle. Olive was dressing her, during which time she talked, rolling about in her fingers a little branch of green. All at once Mme. Récamier, wearing a white dress, entered. She sat down on a blue sofa. Mme. de Staél, who was standing up, continued her conversation, which was extremely animated. She spoke with eloquence, but I scarcely made any reply, as my eyes were fixed on Mme. Récamier. I had never invented anything like that, and I was more than ever discouraged. My admiration changed into bad temper with myself. Mme. Récamier went away and I never saw her again until twelve years later." The fame of Mme. Récamier increased day by day and her beauty became popular. "Under the Consular government," says Thiébault, "the Longchamp promenade recovered a little of its former splendour. Mesdames Hainguérlot, Récamier, and Tallien vied with each other as far as wealth was concerned, and the two latter as regarded beauty. It was quite an

¹ See L. Tendret, *La Table au pays de Brillat-Savarin*, p. 127.

² *Ibid.*, p. 40 and following.

³ Vol. I, p. 371 of the second edition.

⁴ See Sainte-Beuve, *Causeries du Lundi*, I, p. 132 and *Portr. de femmes*, p. 125. ⁵ *M.O.T.*, IV, pp. 372 and 373.

⁶ *Mémoires du général baron Thiébault*, I, p. 148.

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event when it was announced that for the Easter Festival, April 5th, 1801, Juliette Récamier would collect at High Mass in the Church of St. Roch. Religious ceremonies had, as is well known, got back much of their pomp since the *coup d'état* of Brumaire. Madame Récamier had the greatest success on the occasion of this solemnity, which was more social than religious. Blaze published in the *Journal des Défenseurs de la Patrie* some verses in honour of Juliette. He said to her in a somewhat insipid way :

*La modeste et tendre prudeur
Qui sied si bien à l'innocence.
Ce ton, ce sourire enchanteur,
Cette parure où la décence
Répandait un charme vainqueur
Et n'était rien à l'élegance
De plus d'un avare boudeur
Ont vaincu l'âpre résistance.*

As an introduction to this "fugitive" poem Blaze compared the collector to Love, to "that little impostor" who penetrated one day into a convent as far as "the cell of Brigitte and of Ursule." A contributor to the *Journal de Paris* was furious at this, but he replied to Blaze's frivolities in rather a clumsy manner. "There is no comparison," he declares severely, "to be made between Love hastening from cell to cell and Mme. Récamier passing along, with that gentle modesty so becoming to beauty, between the rows of spectators devoutly kneeling in religious meditation, who, subjugated by that tender glance of pity beautified by grace, could not refuse the pious offering of charity." The article in the *Journal de Paris*¹ was only signed V Juliette must have smiled at the polemic, and only seen in it a fresh proof of her success.² Events more worthy of attention solicited her interest.

Mme. Récamier was becoming more and more influenced by Mme. de Staél; she was gradually beginning to share her enthusiasms and her fears. From henceforth, and until

¹ See, too, *Journal de Paris*, 26th of Thermidor, year IX, p. 1965. *Bibliothèque Nationale*, L²/c, 80.

² These incidents were recalled in an article in the *Garde* (April 7, 1901). See, on this subject, some interesting details in the *Souvenirs du général Thiard* (Appendix IV).

the death of Corinne, the existences of these two women reacted so intensely and so constantly upon each other that it is impossible to separate them.

Immediately after the 18th of Brumaire, Mme. de Staél firmly believed that Bonaparte had only worked in the interest and for the benefit of liberty.¹ M. Necker was more distrustful than his daughter, but she, enthusiastic as usual, and obeying her first impulse, gave herself up to the joy of seeing the *fructidorisés* come back under a Government which would, perhaps, make room for Benjamin Constant. On the third of Nivôse, of the year VIII, Benjamin, as a result of steps taken by Joseph, was elected as a member of the Tribunal. For some time still Mme. de Staél boasted of admiring Bonaparte, and she did really admire him. She plotted against him in her *salon*; she rejoiced when the tribune Duverrier gave the signal of the Opposition.² She encouraged Benjamin Constant who, during the sitting of the 15th of Nivôse (Jan. 5, 1800), drew attention to the "restless impatience" of Bonaparte. She was, on this account, violently attacked by the Jacobin press and by the Royalist press.³ But there was much more want of foresight than calculation in her conduct. At the commencement of the year 1800, Mme. de Staél had not yet given her name as belonging to the Opposition, as her remarkable letter to Roederer proves.⁴ On the 15th of Nivôse, of the year VIII, that is the very day when Constant declared at the Tribunal his intention of pleading without reserve the "people's cause," she wrote to the friend whom she suspected: "All this persecution is veritable madness. Where can you find anyone more interested than we are that the Jacobins shall not govern? What woman has at any time been more enthusiastic as regards Bonaparte?" By the month of April, 1800, Mme. de Staél had published her book, *De la littérature considérée dans ses rapports avec les institutions sociales*. This book was, as it has been said, "a sort of ultimatum addressed to the First Consul."⁵ But there was no

¹ Paul Gautier, *Madame de Staél et Napoléon*, p. 35.

² *Ibid.*, p. 35.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 40 and following.

⁴ Quoted by Sainte-Beuve, *Chateaubriand et son groupe*, I, p. 73, note 1.

⁵ Paul Gautier, *Madame de Staél et Napoléon*, p. 51.

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declaration of war yet. On the 8th of June (1800) Mme. de Staël wrote to Samuel Constant : " Your nephew will be here on the 1st of July. He is asking at the Tribunal for two months' grace for Geneva. The real tribune, the real senator, the real legislator is Bonaparte. The country is much better for it. Is it not better, then, to forget about principles ? That is what is being done pretty generally."¹ The victory of Marengo filled her with enthusiasm.²

In the midst of her agitations Mme. de Staël still continued to see Mme. Récamier. She had introduced Chateaubriand to her. She met her out at the house of one of their mutual friends.³ When the Concordat was signed, which was a great surprise to Mme. de Staël, she wrote to Mme. Récamier to ask her what the Montmorencys thought of it. " What do your devout men say to the new treaty with the Pope ? Is it quite orthodox ? We heretics are not clear about all this ; give me a little light on this medley, which is certainly rather strange."⁴

It was in 1802 that Mme. de Staël declared her opposition. She was perhaps rather wanting in judgment. Just as the *Génie du christianisme* appeared, Mme. Récamier found Mme. de Staël one morning reading the chapter entitled : *Examen de la virginité sous ses rapports poétiques*. " I am very sorry," said Mme. de Staël, " but that poor Chateaubriand will be covered with ridicule ; his book will be a failure."⁵ The mistake was considerable, and Mme. de Staël proved by this that she little knew the state of public opinion. Her decision, though, was now taken. She could not forgive Bonaparte the measure by which, on the 20th of January, 1802, he had eliminated twenty members from the Tribunal, and, among others, Benjamin Constant.⁶ It was from this time that she

¹ Published in E. Ritter's *Notes sur Madame de Staël*, p. 105.

² See the letter to Degérando on the 4th of July, 1800 (15th of Messidor) ; Degérando, *Lettres inédites*, p. 36 and following.

³ See a letter from Madame de Staël to Joseph Bonaparte. It is dated Jan. 17, 1801. *Mem. et Corr. du roi Joseph*, Vol. X, 2nd edition, p. 418.

⁴ Letter copied by Ballanche. (Unpublished *Biographie de Mme. R.*, pp. 33, 34, 35) and published in *Mme. R. et les amis de sa jeunesse*, pp. 15 and 16. See *M.O.T.*, IV, p. 390 and following.

⁵ Sainte-Beuve, *Chateaubriand et son groupe*, I, p. 195, note 4.

⁶ See P. Gautier, *Mme. de Staël et Napoléon*, p. 70 and following.

commenced that war of cruel epigrams against the First Consul which irritated him, tried his patience, and brought upon Constant's friend admonitions that were full of threats.

Sainte-Beuve found amongst Chênedollé's papers a note about Mme. de Staél's *salon* in 1802 which he published.¹ "Chateaubriand was to be seen there in all the splendour of his first glory ; Mme. Récamier in the delicate flower of her grace and youth ; Mme. Visconti, with her majestic Roman beauty and her dazzling shoulders ; the Chevalier de Bouflers (*sic*), dressed as carelessly as a country priest, but smiling with the exquisitely refined expression of a courtier and saying the most piquant things in an extremely good-natured manner ; Comte Louis de Narbonne, one of the most agreeable conversationalists of the former Court, always happy in his expressions and resuscitating, in Mme. de Staél's *salon*, the inexhaustible treasures of grace, absurdity, gaiety, and all the seductions of his conversational powers which even succeeded in fascinating Bonaparte himself. Then came the politicians —first Benjamin Constant. He was an interlocutor, a second, worthy of Mme. de Staél."

In such surroundings, Mme. Récamier ran the greatest risks. Whether she realized this or not it is very certain that she became more and more attached every day to Mme. de Staél. She was undoubtedly imprudent, but it showed that she had taste and, perhaps, courage also.

¹ *Chateaubriand et son groupe*, I, p. 189, note 1.

CHAPTER IV

THE JOURNEY TO ENGLAND (1802)

Stay in London (May—June, 1802).—Letters from Mme. de Staël and from Adrien de Montmorency.—Return to Paris; Mme. Degérando's opinion.—Mme. Récamier and the *Secret Agents of Louis XVIII* (August, 1802).—Stay at Clichy.—The arrest of M. Bernard.—Madame Récamier's life; Ch. Monselet's description; the letters of J. F. Reichardt and of Maria Edgeworth.—A day at Clichy-la-Garenne.—Mme. Récamier in the novel of *Delphine*.—Juliette and the theatre.

THE fall of Pitt and the signing of the Peace of Amiens, in March, 1802, brought about, as is well known, a slackening of the tension which existed between France and England. For the first time since the dawn of the Revolution peace was re-established. This tranquillity, after so many storms, was welcomed with enthusiasm by public opinion. Mme. Récamier wanted to take advantage of it and accordingly started with her mother for a journey to England.¹ She took with her letters of introduction from the old Duc de Guines, formerly Ambassador of Louis XVI to London and a fervent admirer of Juliette.

Ballanche, in his unpublished Biography of Juliette, tells us the following episode.² “Mme. Récamier,” he says, “was uneasy about her mother's health, and her doctors recommended change of scene and the Spa waters. It was under these circumstances and upon this occasion that Mme. Récamier went to England. Made much of in the most noted circles, the object of public curiosity and of everyone's

¹ See *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 100 and following.

² Pp. 36, 37, 38 (M. Ch. de Loménie's MSS.).

attention, she fought shy of the demonstrations caused by the effect she produced, although she was not insensible to them. King George IV, at that time Prince of Wales, treated her with that perfect amiability for which he was noted. The Duchess of Devonshire, whose face is so celebrated, considered it a triumph to show her to her friends at her own home and to the delighted public at the theatre. The newspapers blazoned her name abroad, her portrait was engraved and circulated in all the English towns. It is in the Bartolozzi collection. In London, as in Paris, she was surrounded whenever she appeared and, in spite of the pleasure it gave her to hear how beautiful she was, she always looked ready to take flight when attention was fixed on her. A fête given to the Prince of Wales, the evening before her departure, was a fresh success for her. She yielded to persuasion and consented to play a duet on the harp with M. Marin, whose admirable talent had won him such celebrity, and after the concert she danced at the ball. The English and French papers vied with each other in celebrating this concert. They dwelt particularly on “the gracious and eager enthusiasm of the Prince of Wales and his undivided attentions to Mme. Récamier.”

Whilst in London, Juliette became friendly with the beautiful Elizabeth Forster, who in her turn was to become Duchess of Devonshire, and with the Marquis of Douglas, later on Duke of Hamilton. She met the Duc d'Orléans, then in exile, and his two young brothers, the Prince de Beaujolais and the Prince de Montpensier.¹ There are many proofs, among which we have only to choose, testifying to her success. The Duchess of Devonshire took her to the theatre, where her beauty triumphed.² The English aristocracy, modifying its customs, did not await her visits before going to welcome her.³ According to Viscount Walsh in his *Souvenirs de cinquante ans*,⁴ “the first Sunday in May, the day on which the whole capital of the Three Kingdoms goes to Kensington Gardens for the inauguration of Spring, Mme. Récamier

¹ Compare *M.O.T.*, Vol. IV, p. 392.

² See W. Russell, *Extraordinary Women*.

³ Rondelet, work quoted, p. 107.

⁴ Page 369.

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appeared in the midst of the crowd. According to the French fashion of that day she wore on her hat a lace veil à l'*Iphigénie*, a veil that reached to the ground, wrapping the woman who wore it round in a kind of white cloud both light and diaphanous. John Bull, not very courteous and gallant usually, fell on his knees." The French papers were very much interested in this journey, and on the 27th of Prairial of the year X, the *Journal de Paris*¹ gives this extract from the English papers: "The pretty Frenchwoman (Mme. Récamier) is leaving London. Praise, poetry, and applause follow her wherever she goes, but do not reach her. She repels the homage offered to her graces with that sweet modesty which is one grace more. She appears not to hear all the praise, and not to see all the flattering attentions of which she is the object everywhere. A witty man said to her, yesterday: 'Madame, you intend to leave here then without having seen Mme. Récamier?'"

Juliette received news from France through the intimate friends she had left there. Mme. de Staél wrote her an interesting letter, the entire text of which has never been published. It describes the state of mind in Paris just then:

"PARIS, 13th of Floréal (Year X).

"Well, beautiful Juliette, are you regretting us? Will the success you are having in London make you forget your Paris friends? I have seen one of them, Adrien, who has been really sad ever since your departure. We talked about you for an hour, and I was very pleased with him. He has gone to Dampierre. I am leaving to-morrow for six months. All who love you are dispersing. Let me hear from you. I hope you have lost that strange shyness you felt when you last wrote. Can you not see that I love you and that the intelligence of which you accuse me only serves to divine you all the more, and to find fresh reasons for being fondly attached to you. Nothing fresh in Paris as regards society events. Duroc is to marry Mlle. d'Ervas; Mad. Grand they say is to be married to M. de Talleyrand. Bonaparte would like everyone to marry, bishops, cardinals, &c. I wish it

¹ Page 1661.

were allowed for all the priests to marry ; there would be no more fear of them then. If you see the Duchess of Devonshire please tell her how much I should like to see her again. Will you give my kind regards, too, to Lady Caher (?) ? You must think about me and, so that you shall do so, I am making you speak of me. I took a Russian lady to your flat. It made me sad to see it all upside down. I shall not see you again until next winter. Two journeys a year show too exactly how life is passing by. It is not possible to forget its progress. Adieu, beautiful Juliette, it seems to me that everyone is getting bored to death in Paris. Since there has been nothing more to think about, and nothing more to say, no one knows how to pass the time, and I see men and women moving slowly about together, with neither love nor ambition. You are in a country where people still live by their soul and intelligence. What shall you say about us when you come back ? Everything you like, but do not have a greater friendship for any other woman than you have for me. Remember me, please, to Mme. Bernard.”¹

At the same time the pleasant intrigue with Adrien de Montmorency continued by correspondence. Juliette sent him letters which do not seem to have been exempt from coquetry ; her witty and passionate friend replied by letters that were much longer than hers.

On the 8th of May Adrien de Montmorency writes from Paris to Juliette as follows :—“I have just come back from the country where I received a kind letter from you. You deign to tell me something of your life. You speak of those social pleasures which you enjoy, but at the same time despise. Thank you for leaving them a few minutes in order to write a few friendly words to me. You were then going to Bath, where you will certainly have had the same tiresome success which was so trying for your modesty in London, and of which the Paris newspapers were full. This is glory, to be able to keep the two great capitals of the world occupied with

¹ Text copied from manuscript (M. Ch. de Loménie's MSS.). A great part of this letter was published in *Coppet et Weimar*, p. 25 and following. Lady Blenn, who quotes it (Vol. II, p. 462) gives Mme. Récamier's journey as taking place in 1800, which is a mistake.

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your beauty. I wrote you a letter from Dampierre, the result of a silence that I considered unjust, and of bitter reflections which were unendurable when I gave myself up to thinking. I wrote it the evening before I received your letter, which was a volume in comparison with the two notes received before. Accustomed as you are to praise, my letter must have appeared to you blameworthy. The style of it was very different from the ‘sweet things’ that are thrown every day at your feet. You see that I suppose you have learnt a little English. I am going to Clichy to-morrow to dine with M. de (illegible). I do not consider that Ambassador showed his face to advantage by putting it in the same frame as yours. You tell me in your letter, with all the vagueness of most discreet propriety, that the dissipations of your visit abroad do not prevent your regretting some of your friends, and that you will be glad to see them again. I took from this proper phrase all that might be intended for politeness for me. Mme. de Sta. and I have quite different ideas about the mysteries of your behaviour and the intentions of your journey. I do not think anyone in the world has given so much study to knowing you as I have, nor has succeeded so badly. There are inequalities and contradictions in you which are inexplicable to me. You are not happy and you want to be. That is what I do know.”¹

The disconcerting ways of Mme. Récamier did not discourage Adrien de Montmorency. The letters which he sent her before her return are a proof of this :

“ June 17th, DAMPIERRE.

“ I received, the day before yesterday, two of your letters together, the one full of reproaches and severity, the other of a more recent date and in a kinder tone. In this all your resentment seems to have disappeared. The letter which you blame so strongly, and which you send me back, certainly cost me more pain to write than it did you to receive it. What do you expect from me by way of reparation? Excuses or acts of repentance? All my pride I laid a long

¹ Unpublished letter from Adrien de Montmorency. Without any address. M. Ch. de Loménie’s MSS.

time ago at your feet. It will not cost me anything to confess the faults I may have, and those that I have not.

"But I am writing to you to London, and you are perhaps on the way back to Paris. Your second letter does not speak of this, and for those who are connoisseurs in kind sentiments there is a hundred times more indifference in this forgetfulness than in the most angry speech. You know all this as well as I do, but it is your plan not to agree that it is so. Mysterious, inconceivable person that you are. How strange your sentiments and your proceedings are! How unfortunate it is to attach so much importance to them, whilst you only attribute to them incredulity. You have a way of turning things that are said to you round in a way which prevents my saying any more. What is this danger that you have been in, about which all your friends, with the exception of me, have spoken to you? I was not aware of it, for you know I never talk about you except to you yourself. During the last two months I have only spent two days in Paris. Your friends are not mine; for there is always something in your friendships which makes me uneasy."¹

"June 28th, PARIS.

"I cannot tell you how much affected I was by the letter you wrote me from Harwich. There was something melancholy in that letter which seemed to belong to the person who was just about to leave land, something profound and agitated like the sea to which you were about to trust yourself. But perhaps the memory of those impressions is already obliterated, already far from you and no longer existing except in the heart of him to whom you confided them. There is not time now to reply to all your attacks with regard to my frivolity. My opinion is that you do not believe in it any more than I do, and that you know very well, as I do, that it exists in my tastes and not in my sentiments. It will be better for me to prepare to see you again and to judge whether this absence about which you congratulate yourself has made you kinder in your judg-

¹ Unpublished letter from Adrien de Montmorency. (M. Ch. de Loménié's letters.) Address: Madame Récamier, London.

ments. I knew Spa as one of the most diverting places on earth. But the pleasure that you always enjoy is what you are never looking out for. By preparing for it you prevent yourself from liking it, and you despise those who do like it. With all these inconsistencies you are the most fascinating and dangerously agreeable person I have ever known.”¹

Juliette returned to France through Holland. Mme. Degérando, who saw her on her return, wrote on the 22nd of July, 1802, to the Baronne de Stein :² “ Women writers are, I think, less appreciated here than in Germany. Frenchmen only want youth, grace, pleasure and vivacity of sentiment in the sex which is so adulated and so unfairly judged by them. Mme. Récamier is certainly perfection of this kind. The gazettes will have kept you informed with regard to her journeys and her success in London, Bath, Scotland, at Spa and in Holland. She is now back here ; we are neighbours and almost friends already. I do not know why, but she has taken a sort of fancy to me. I feel irresistibly attracted by her delicious face. She is a good little creature, not spoilt as much as she might be by her immense fortune and the folly of fashion and of men, who assign to her the first rank among pretty women. But although there is a certain sympathy between us, you must not expect from her very serious ideas nor yet very profound sentiments.”

In spite of the thrust at the end, Mme. Dégerando’s criticism was fairly friendly.³ Juliette was not liked everywhere as much. One section of the royalist society kept her aloof. The *Agents de Louis XVIII*, for instance, in their *Relations secrètes*⁴ scoffed at her rather cruelly about her journey to London. The following anecdote is to be found in their diary, dated August 23rd, 1802 : “ Whilst the higher classes of society, amateurs and artists, eagerly paid their homage to Mme. Récamier in London, the people had a

¹ Unpublished letter. (Collection of letters from Adrien de Montmorency. M. Ch. de Loménie’s MSS.) Address : Madame Récamier, poste restante. Spa, via Liège, Département de l’Ourthe.

² Saint-Ouen : *Lettres*, pp. 185 and 186.

³ In 1803 in the *Dernier chapitre de mon roman*, p. 57 of the edition of 1832, Ch. Nodier made a very kindly allusion to Juliette’s success in England.

⁴ Pp. 105 and 106.

singular idea of this woman. A political exile, who had lived in London several years, went to spend a few days there and, when paying a visit to one of his friends, was received by an old English housekeeper, who asked him what news he brought from Paris. ‘None,’ he replied. ‘Ah, ah !’ said the old lady, ‘you do not mention Mme. Récamier. You must own that your tradespeople were very clever. They sent us over a milliner in disguise, and paid all her enormous travelling expenses to get their styles and chiffons into fashion over here, but we were not taken in long. . . .’ The mistake was rather amusing. We might ask, though, who made the greatest mistake about Mme. Récamier, this poor housekeeper, or the English ladies who paid court to the wife of a former Lyons hatter.”

On her return from England Juliette commenced her receptions once more. In July and August, 1802, M. de Calonne was to be met at her house.¹ He was at this time still very attentive to women and as gay and volatile as in his best days. Mme. Récamier was making progress every day in the difficult art of entertaining, in which she was destined to become incomparable. Sainte-Beuve, who was not easily duped, tells how at the Clichy Château, where she spent the summer of 1802, she managed to bring men together, for a few minutes at least, who were most different. One day, Adrien and Mathieu de Montmorency, General Moreau, and some distinguished Englishmen, Fox, Erskine and others met in her *salon*. “They were all together, and were observing each other. Each one tried not to begin the conversation, but M. de Narbonne, who was present, finally endeavoured to start it. In spite of his intelligence he did not succeed. Mme. Récamier then entered the room, she spoke first to Mr. Fox, said a few words to each of the others, and then introduced every person to each other with a little appropriate praise, and immediately the conversation became general, the natural bond was found.”² Nevertheless, in spite of the widely extended hospitality which kept around her men with very opposite ideas,

¹ “A. Rainci,” *Agents de Louis XVIII*, p. 88.

² *Causeries du Lundi*, I, p. 134.



Napoleon

Juliette Récamier began to compromise herself by her avowed attachment to some of those who were fighting against the increasing ambition of Bonaparte. At the very time when the plebiscite had given to the First Consul the Consulship for life, whilst, in spite of the opposition of the Tribunal the Constitution of the year X was being elaborated and was voted on the 2nd of August, Mme. Récamier did not conceal her liking for men such as Jordan. In July, 1802, Camille Jordan had had a pamphlet printed with the title, *Meaning of the national vote on the question of the Consulship for life*. Mingled with praises, he addressed some keen criticisms to the First Consul. The edition was seized before a single copy had been sold. Jordan narrowly escaped arrest, and his work was suppressed.¹ The pamphlet was reprinted and distributed secretly.² The Government, in order to reply to it, employed the *Journal des Défenseurs*, and began to keep a watch on Jordan's friends. No one at that time was more devoted to him than Mme. Récamier.

M. Bernard's affair was more definite and much more serious. According to Méneval,³ M. Bernard, who was Postmaster, "lent his protection to a periodical, edited by one of his friends, the Abbé Guyot,⁴ against the Government, the First Consul, and the members of his family." This is what Méneval calls an abuse of confidence.⁵ A fragment of Mme.

¹ *Agents de Louis XVIII*, p. 65.

² *Ibid.*, p. 86.

³ *Mémoires*, II, p. 13.

⁴ Guillon, according to Mme. Lenormant, *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 68.

⁵ The Duc de Rovigo (*Mémoires*, V, p. 8 and following) gives further details about it. According to him it was Lucien, then Ambassador in Spain, who unintentionally brought the incident to light. One of his couriers, who had been sent to Paris, was commissioned by Méchin, Prefect of the Landes, and by the Commissioner of police at Bordeaux, to take to the First Consul twelve numbers of a paper insulting him. Fouché, during the investigation of the affair, discovered M. Bernard's complicity with the Abbé Guyot, editor of the paper in question. M. Bernard wanted to free himself by resigning his post. We must remember that this version was published in 1828, when Mme. Récamier was still living. Bourrienne, replying to Rovigo in 1829 (*Mémoires*, X, p. 326) affirms that Bonaparte laid claim "to a sentiment quite different from that of gratitude." "It will be remembered," he says, "that I was with the First Consul at the time of the accusation against M. Bernard, and I have not forgotten on what terms the reintegration even was to be granted." According to Bourrienne (work quoted, p. 327), Mme. Récamier alluded to this fact when, later on, she was exiled, and said to Fouché: "Ah, Monseigneur, one can forgive a great man for his weakness in loving women, but not for

Récamier's *Mémoires* gives the particulars of this incident.¹ M. Bernard certainly was Post-master: he allowed clandestine writings to circulate destined for royalist propaganda. At the end of a dinner at her own house, when Mme. Bacciochi, Mme. de Staël, La Harpe, Narbonne, and Mathieu de Montmorency were present, Juliette was informed that her father had been arrested and taken to the Temple prison. Mme. Bacciochi refused to intervene with her brother. Fouché, to whom Juliette immediately went, excused himself on the grounds of his powerlessness in the matter. Mme. Récamier, in despair, went to the Théâtre-Français to speak to Mme. Bacciochi again, and it was there that Bernadotte came to the rescue. If it were not too long an account and already well known, we should like to quote Mme. Récamier's own description of the incident. In the stage-box, to which he had taken Mme. Bacciochi and Mme. Leclerc, Bernadotte saw Juliette arrive in desperation. He offered to go back with her and help her. He went to the Tuileries and, by his entreaties, obtained a promise from the First Consul that M. Bernard should not be arraigned. He then went back to inform Mme. Récamier. The following day she saw her father in the Temple prison, where she had to hide in a dungeon herself for two hours to escape being discovered. A few days later Bernadotte brought his order of release. M. Bernard was discharged, and Mme. Récamier was wise enough to make no complaint about that. She had known nothing about her father's doings in the matter; her testimony about this is emphatic² and frees her from all suspicion of complicity. She was a royalist, but by sentiment rather than conviction.³ We may believe this, as she protests against that passage in the *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène*, which represents her⁴ hastening to the First Consul and, later on, demanding her father's re-

that of fearing them." The *Archives Nationales* contain about four papers relating to the Bernard affair. They are not very interesting (F⁷ 6283, dossier 5774), but they give the dates. On the 16th of Nivôse of the year IX (January 6, 1801) from Calais, the Commissioner of the Government proposes to the Minister of Police a candidate to replace the citizen Bernard, Post-master, who had been dismissed.

¹ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 67 and following.

² *Ibid.*, p. 68.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

⁴ Vol. II, p. 309. Under the date of February 29, 1816.

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integration. Bonaparte was generous, for M. Bernard might have been put to death ; but Juliette was discreet, and understood, no doubt, the delicacy of the situation.¹

However it may have been, it was Bernadotte who profited by the adventure. Mme. Lenormant published the letter in which he asks Mme. Récamier for the memorandum which had to be submitted to the Minister of Police before he could grant the release of M. Bernard.² The account that a recent historian has published is much more piquant. Bernadotte wrote to his brother-in-law, Joseph Bonaparte : “I am yielding with a certain pleasure, my dear Joseph, to the request that Mme. Récamier has just made me. She asks me to give you a note of justification written by her father to the First Consul. This woman, whose beauty and grace resemble Venus [sic], appears to have come down from Olympus to assume the attitude of a petitioner to you. . . . Magisterial gravity, it seems to me, might for a moment give up its sombre looks and yield to more kindly sentiments. It is in the hope of this that she counts on your good services for a word of recommendation to the General, when sending him the enclosed note.”³

From this incident dates the deep affection that Bernadotte conceived for Mme. Récamier. He never forgot her from thenceforth. In 1806, when she was ruined, he was one of the first to send her his condolence. On the eve of a battle he thought of her. “When talking to you,” he writes to her, “when thinking of you I little imagined that I was to contribute to the dawn of day, to decide the fate of the world. . . . If you still think of me, remember that you are my chief thought and that nothing can equal the tender and loving affection I have for you.”⁴ When, in 1810, Bernadotte started for Sweden he sent Juliette a respectful and touching farewell.⁵

The arrest of M. Bernard marks the time when Mme.

¹ The account by Sainte-Beuve is exact, except that he exaggerates the kindness of Mme. Bacciochi. *Causeries du Lundi*, I, p. 129.

² *Souv. et Corr.*, I, pp. 77 and 78.

³ Frédéric Masson, *Figaro Illustré*, March 1893, p. 54.

⁴ C.L.A.R., No. 15. Add to this No. 16.

⁵ See his letter in *Souv. et Corr.*, I, pp. 165 and 166.

Récamier began to turn away from Bonaparte and from those who were on his side, and to approach his adversaries. Very soon after this, reverses of fortune began to affect her. It is just at this moment then, that we ought to see her in all the splendour of her social reign. Charles Monselet has given us a picture, no doubt a little exaggerated, of her brilliant existence. Certain parts of it are well worth remembering. He shows us Juliette installed in her palace in the Rue du Mont-Blanc, and giving her receptions there. "Berthaut, the architect, had transformed the house into a veritable fairyland; it was like a story by Galland solidified. Ask Mme. Lehon about it, as she later on became the owner of the house. Mme. Récamier's balls were not long in having an immense vogue. All the new gavottes came from there, and the pieces of music destined to become popular, as well as Egyptian, Spartan, Roman, Turkish, and French costumes. It was a perfect frenzy, a triumph unequalled anywhere else. Mme. Hamelin, a heroine of those fêtes, Mme. Hamelin with her Cinderella-like foot, alone could have described to you one of those magical evenings, which only wanted a painter like Watteau, a poet like Lattaignant or Voisenon, the Abbé Fusée! As to the everyday *habitués*, the intimate friends, who met for the morning chat, these were Lucien Bonaparte, Mr. Fox, Mme. Visconti, General Moreau, Mathieu de Montmorency, that thin, pale, fair Mme. de Krüdener, and the lively Ouvrard, a personage full of animation and gay science."¹

With less imagination but more precision, some of the foreigners who were admitted to Juliette's house have described the marvels that they admired there.

It is in this way that we have, about Mme. Récamier's life during the Consulate, a rather curious testimony in the private letters which J. F. Reichardt wrote from Paris, in 1802 and 1803, and which appeared in Hamburg as early as 1804. Reichardt was a former *maître de chapelle* under Frederick II.² He visited France in 1792 and studied it in a friendly and

¹ *Portraits après décès*, pp. 136 and 137.

² See A. Laquinte, *Un hiver à Paris sous le Consulat*, Introduction; and *Un Prussien en France en 1792*, Strasbourg, Lyon, Paris. Laquinte has cut down Reichardt's text.

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intelligent spirit. His observations on the manners and customs under the Consulate make the personages of the epoch live again, particularly those in whom we are interested.

It was at a gathering at the house of the Marquis Lucchesini that Reichardt saw Mme. Récamier for the first time. She was wearing a costume of white and gold, and he thought her charming.¹ He wanted to pay her a visit at once. He presented himself at her house and was surprised to hear the porter say to him in the middle of the afternoon, "It is too early yet for Madame." This was an expression used in those days for dismissing visitors that were not wanted.²

Poor Reichardt soon had a compensation, though, as he was invited³ to one of the splendid fêtes given by the banker Récamier, and he describes all the details of this reception which so amazed him. Let us follow him in his account of it, as we shall have no better opportunity of studying the luxurious existence of Mme. Récamier at the time of her great wealth.

The house, Reichardt says, was not very immense, but it was imposing-looking, particularly on a night when there was a fête.⁴ In the courtyard there were numerous lamp-posts, on the stone steps Turkey carpets and rare shrubs and flowers. The suite of rooms consisted of the hall, two drawing-rooms to the right, Mme. Récamier's bedroom, bath-room and boudoir, the two latter rooms on the left. Each time a lady entered, the mistress of the house said: "Would you like to see my bedroom?"⁵ Mme. Récamier then took her guest by the arm and led her to the most elegant room in all the house, whereupon, the men, "young and old," hurried forward to have their share in the sight.

Reichardt was not more discreet than the others, since he

¹ Sie ist wirklich sehr hübsch und überaus angenehm, I, p. 161. Laquante, p. 62.

² I, p. 221. Laquante, p. 89. ³ At the end of November 1802.

⁴ I, p. 222. Laquante (p. 96, note 1) points out, with regard to this, that the Hôtel Récamier was pulled down about 1890 and No. 66 of the Chaussée d'Antin put up on its site.

⁵ These words are in French in Reichardt's text.

can describe the sanctuary to us in all its details.¹ The bedroom, he tells us, was very large: the walls almost entirely covered with high, wide mirrors all in one piece. Between the glasses and the inlaid doors of artistic workmanship, a white wainscoting with brown beading relieved by bronze ornamentation.² Facing the windows, the wall at the far end was entirely formed of a glass. The "couch of the goddess" (*das ächterische Götterbett*) was all white and covered with the finest Indian textures. The woodwork of the bed was of a beautiful antique shape and was also ornamented with bronze. Elegant vases were placed on the two steps of the raised platform on which it stood. At the back were two tall candelabra, each one of six or eight branches. The bed-curtains were white.³ At the back was a heavy violet curtain of damask which fell in handsome folds; it was well raised at the sides for the glass on the wall to be left free, so that when Mme. Récamier was in bed she could be seen reflected in it from head to foot.

Reichardt also saw the bath-room. Like the bedroom, it was also ornamented with glasses, partly covered with heavy green silk. He describes the bath,⁴ which could be, when wanted, transformed into a sofa, covered with red morocco. This luxury, which makes us smile, astounded the worthy German. The bath-room led to the boudoir, which was enlivened with paintings.

The evening when Reichardt saw the *salon*, this room was too small to hold the crowd of guests, the "*beau monde de Paris*," representatives of the various diplomatic corps, and foreigners of mark.⁵ The ladies were seated round in a circle

¹ I, p. 223. See, too, Sir John Carr. *Impressions de voyage*, p. 175 and following.

² Laquante (p. 97) has slightly altered for the worse Reichardt's description.

³ I, p. 224. "Der Hintergrund besteht übrigens aus einem schweren violetten damastenen Vorhang der von oben bis unten in schönen Falten herunterfällt und an beiden Seiten stark auseinander geht um die Spiegelwand so frei zu lassen, dass, wenn Madame Récamier im Bett liegt, man sie von der Scheitel bis zur Zehe ganz im Spiegel wieder sieht."

⁴ I, pp. 224 and 225. "Die Badewanne in einer Nische von Spiegeln, machte gestern einen schönen Sofa von rothem Saffan, und so waren auch die niedrigen Fauteuils in dem Badzimmer bekleidet."

⁵ I, p. 226.

and, in the space between the arm-chairs, quadrilles were danced. Reichardt saw there Vestris, Marie-Auguste Vestris-Allard, whose suppleness and lightness were still more appreciated by the Parisian public than the noble manner of his father. Vestris was particularly noted for the way in which he crossed the Opera stage at its widest part in two strides. Reichardt was struck by his extraordinary way of doing his hair and by his immense necktie, and he thought the over-exuberance of the dancer ridiculous in good society.¹

Mme. Récamier was the only woman who danced, wearing a train. She required a great deal of pressing, and whilst she condescended to let herself be admired, Reichardt listened to the spiteful things said about the coquetry of the mistress of the house.² He noticed, though, that she was not painted. She wore a dress of white satin and muslin cut low at the back.³ She had the most graceful, almost childish look. She kept glancing up and would half open her mouth, in which her beautiful teeth shone. Her hair was arranged simply, in curls,⁴ and ornamented with a wide band of black velvet, which on one side covered the forehead almost to the eyes, and was fastened on the top of the head.

Reichardt observed, too, that the orchestra was admirably conducted by a mulatto violinist,⁵ who was very much in favour. He noticed in the assembly, Garat the singer, the banker Tourton, the painter Gérard, Camille Jordan,⁶ some young generals, Junot in a blue dress coat with brown waist-coat and breeches.⁷ Towards two in the morning a warm supper was served ; Reichardt then went away, after having taken a glass of wine and a small pot of cream from the hands of Mme. Récamier herself.⁸

This fête made a vivid impression on our chronicler. Later on, when at the house of Mme. Cabarrus, otherwise Mme. Tallien, who after her divorce⁹ took her family name again,

¹ I, p. 226.

² I, p. 227.

³ I, p. 227. Here again Laquante (p. 100) slightly paraphrases the text.

⁴ "Mit einem breiten schwarzen Samtbande, das auf einer Seite die Stirn fast bis ans Auge bedeckte, ziemlich hoch in die Höhe gebunden."

⁵ I, p. 229.

⁶ I, p. 230.

⁷ I, p. 231.

⁸ I, p. 232. Laquante, p. 102.

⁹ In August 1802.

he noticed there that the bedroom was of a more severe style than that of Mme. Récamier,¹ but he mentions it without any insinuations. A little time after this he met Juliette at the house of Hubert Robert, where she was painting a landscape.² A room was reserved for her next to the great artist's studio. He was invited again to her house to a ball, where Trenitz danced. There were a great many foreigners there. Reichardt again gives us a very picturesque description of the fête ; he was very much amused at the expense of some young Englishmen, whose awkwardness caused some accidents.³

Discretion was decidedly not the chief merit of Juliette's guests. Reichardt wanted to know what were Mme. Récamier's favourite books. He found, scattered about on various pieces of furniture, Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Young's *Night Thoughts*, and Raynal's *Histoire philosophique des deux Indes*."⁴

The ex-maître de chapelle often went after this to Mme. Récamier's gatherings. One evening he saw there General Moreau holding a dissertation in the midst of a group of Austrian officers.⁵ He met Juliette sometimes at other soirées, to which he always went eagerly when he had an opportunity. Mme. Récamier was always much more richly dressed than at her own fêtes. One evening at Prince Dolgorouki's she appeared in a dress of black satin embroidered with gold ; her hair, held up by a band, was adorned with precious stones, and she was framed, as it were, in a veil of white tulle. Reichardt considered this theatrical toilette scarcely suitable for the unaffected and languorous style of Juliette.⁶

At the time of the Consulate, Mme. Récamier received on Mondays. Reichardt stayed long enough in Paris to see the Chaussée d'Antin gatherings stopped by an official order. He congratulated Juliette then more than he pitied her for not continuing these réunions, which must have been so tiring to her on account of the number of her guests. The English

¹ "Weit grössern Styl," I, p. 453. Laquante, p. 203.

² I, p. 481.

³ I, p. 485.

⁴ I, p. 485. Laquante, p. 219.

⁵ II, p. 67 and following. Laquante, p. 259.

⁶ II, p. 180. Laquante, pp. 300 and 301.

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more particularly, Reichardt tells us, simply invaded her house.¹

There certainly were a great many English in Paris during the Consulate. This reminds us of Voltaire's lines in the *Trois Empereurs en Sorbonne*:

"Quelque bien qu'on puisse être, on veut changer de place,
C'est pourquoi les Anglais sortent de leur pays."

English women more particularly were very curious to see Mme. Récamier in her own home, and we therefore have some picturesque accounts.

Maria Edgeworth was in France in 1802, and on the 18th of November her father, R. Lovell Edgeworth, wrote to Miss Charlotte Sneyd the following lines : " We went by appointment to the house of Mme. Campan, who has the largest educational institution here, to meet Mme. Récamier, that celebrated beauty who was nearly stifled to death when she was in London. As to whether we were pleased with the school and the Principal, who prides herself on giving a practical education, I leave Maria to tell you. It is more easy for me to give you an opinion about Mme. Récamier. She is certainly beautiful, although there is nothing dignified about her carriage. She was very pleasant." ² Miss Edgeworth, in her turn, writes on the 21st of November : " On Friday at Mme. Récamier's we saw beauty, wealth, fashion, luxury—in a word, a crowd. She herself is a delicious woman, living in the midst of a group of adorers and flatterers, in an atmosphere in which wealth and taste are combined and modern art made more beautiful by ancient art. The centre in which she moves is a strange medley of commercial men and poets, philosophers and *parvenus*, of English, French, Portuguese, and Brazilian nationalities. We were received by our hostess with the greatest kindness, and to finish the evening she took us with her to her box at the Opera, where, beside the pleasure of being in the company of the women

¹ II, pp. 238 and 239. Laquante, p. 320. Miss Berry in her diary (II, pp. 177 and 191) also describes Mme. Récamier's abode. Her description accords with that of Reichardt, but Miss Berry gives a few little spiteful additions.

² *Lettres int. de M. Edgeworth*, pp. 28 and 29. Translation, P.G.

who were the most in vogue, we were seen by Bonaparte, who was opposite us in a closed box, in which he could himself see without being seen.¹

Finally, in a letter written in December, she says : “The nouveaux riches are people of quite a different kind it appears. My father met a few at the house of Mme. Tallien (now Mme. Cabarrus), and he was disgusted with them. Mme. Récamier is of quite another type ; although she is a woman very much in vogue she is a beauty who is always gracious, *décente*,² and who has an excellent reputation.”

With Mme. Récamier and the Princess Dolgorouki, Maria Edgeworth went to La Harpe’s. She describes the wretched house in which the old critic was living, the “little dark hole” in which he worked, his untidy reddish dressing-gown, his night-cap, “held on his head by a chocolate-coloured ribbon, extremely dirty.” Mme. Récamier, dressed in white satin and furs, “seated herself on the arm of his chair and begged him to recite some of his poetry.”³ There are some forms of politeness which are akin to courage.

We could quote other descriptions and other testimonies. In preference to this, after showing how Juliette Récamier received at her town house we will give an idea as to the distractions she offered her friends when she invited them to the country. We have a very detailed account of this which resuscitates for us manners and customs at the time of the Consulate.

The Baronne de V., whose souvenirs have been added by the publisher, Ladvocat, to those of Constant, the Emperor’s valet, describes a concert at Mme. Récamier’s.⁴ She had been invited to this fête, at which actors from the Opera sang. The account appears to be fairly exact. It gives us an idea of Adrien de Montmorency and his pleasant banter. Criticism is mingled with praise. The Baronne de V. reproaches Juliette with inviting too many guests.

The same witness spent a day at Clichy-la-Garenne in the spring. As France was then at peace, the Government was

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 30 and 31.

² The word is in French in the original, p. 53.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

⁴ III. *Mémoires de Constant*, p. 32 and following.

less severe with political emigrants. The baroness arrived at about ten in the morning for the fête. Mme. Récamier went with her mother and La Harpe to Mass during the morning, and on returning changed her dress. Narbonne, Camille Jordan, Junot, and Bernadotte were awaiting her in the drawing-room. Talma then arrived, and “M. de Longchamps, who was to read the *Séducteur amoureux*,¹ a piece about which he wanted M. de La Harpe’s opinion, before giving it to the Committee of the Théâtre Francais.” Very soon afterwards Lamoignon appeared, and then Adrien and Mathieu de Montmorency, General Moreau, Fox, Lord and Lady Holland, Erskine, and Adaïr. Old and new France met before these illustrious foreigners. There was a moment of embarrassment, and then Mme. Récamier entered, introduced her guests to Fox, and started the conversation. At luncheon she was seated between Fox and Moreau. “War and politics were talked,” says the Baronne de V. . . . “and also literature and the fine arts. England and France were compared, and an attempt was made to characterize the respective merit of these two people.² La Harpe was seated next Erskine. “One subject after another was discussed. Moreau’s famous retreat, Fox’s addresses to the King in order to force Pitt to make peace, Erskine’s speeches about the jury, M. de Narbonne’s administration, La Harpe’s lectures on Literature, Montmorency’s public and private life, Junot’s bravery, Dupaty’s verses, etc. . . .”

Whilst coffee was being served, Eugène de Beauharnais and his friend, Philippe de Ségur, were announced. The company then dispersed for a stroll in the park. The guests met again to hear Talma in a scene from Othello, and in Macbeth’s speech, from the text of Ducis. After the departure of Talma, Nadermann and Frédéric gave a duet and, finally, Mme. Récamier sang a charming song by Plantade, accompanying herself on the harp.

Fresh guests took the places of those who had gone. The Duchess of Gordon arrived, and her daughter, the Lady

¹ A comedy in verse in three acts, represented for the first time by the actors of the Théâtre-Français of the Republic on the 4th of Pluviôse of the year XI.—In Paris at Barba’s.—In the year XI, 1803.

² Page 39 of the work already mentioned.

Georgiana, later on Duchess of Bedford. M. de Longchamps read his piece in their presence. La Harpe had only just complimented him on it when Vestris appeared. He had come to rehearse with Juliette "to the accompaniment of the harp and the horn," the gavotte that she was to dance the following day.

After the ballet, the description of which we omit, although it is written in the style of the time, the Duchess of Gordon, Mme. Récamier, and the Baronne de V. . . . started for the Bois de Boulogne. At five, dinner was served at the Château. Other guests were brought in by M. Récamier: Lalande, the astronomer, and Degérando, the philanthropist.

"A remarkable individual was expected that day," says the same witness, "the famous Aveyron savage.¹ He arrived finally, accompanied by M. Yzard, who was his professor, doctor, and benefactor combined."² This Aveyron savage excited the curiosity of all Paris at that time. Mme. Récamier seated him by herself (it was like Mlle. de Saint-Yves and the Ingénue). Suddenly, in the midst of a heated discussion about Lalande's fondness for spiders,³ cries were heard, and everyone went out in the garden. The young savage was to be seen, quite naked, installed in the branches of a tree. The ladies were terrified, and he could only be enticed down by a basket of peaches. M. de La Harpe profited by the occasion to moralize. "I should like to see J. J. Rousseau here," he exclaimed, "with his declamations against the social state."⁴

Towards seven o'clock carriages arrived, bringing visitors for the evening entertainment. Fruit and ices were served. Mme. Récamier then proposed a walk in the village, and her guests all took part in a country fête, suggested by the arrival of a wedding party at the Clichy refreshment house. It was getting dark and Juliette was escorted by the Comte de Markoff. The company returned to the Château, where they found Mme. de Stael, Mme. Viotte, General Marmont and

¹ Degérando.

² Page 48.

³ He simply ate them.

⁴ See the anecdotes about Lalande, p. 52.

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his wife, the Marquis and the Marquise de Lucchesini. The evening ended with proverbs. "We began with some dramatic scenes. The first was *Hagar in the wilderness*. Mme. de Staél played the part of Hagar, her son that of Ishmael, and Mme. Récamier represented the angel."¹ With her "long hair all dishevelled" Mme. de Staél produced a most pathetic effect. When the scene was finished Mme. Viotte sang her latest song, *l'Émigration du plaisir*. After the proverbs, charades were acted with disguises. At eleven supper was announced. The Marquis de Lucchesini distinguished himself by his wit. At midnight the guests left, and the fête was at last over.

Madame de Staél, as we see by this account, was still very intimate with Juliette Récamier. Some important events had disturbed the equanimity of her life during this year, 1802. On the 9th of May, during that journey which Mme. de Staél announced to Mme. Récamier in her letter of the 13th Floréal, M. de Staél had died at Poligny in the Jura. The *Agents secrètes de Louis XVIII* accused Mme. de Staél of having hastened his death by the care she took of his money. The baron, although very much in debt, had a mania for collections. Mme. de Staél had insisted on his selling his valuable furniture and his bronze and porphyry vases. M. de Staél, after seeing this sale take place, left Paris very disconsolate. He died before reaching Coppet. If these agents are to be believed, Mme. de Staél wrote to the chaplain of the Swedish Embassy a very edifying letter. She acknowledged that she had been to blame with regard to her husband, whom she declared that she regretted. "Since his misfortunes," she adds, "I had tried to be more to him, and had finally succeeded. I had just paid his debts, and I was taking him to a place where he would have found peace and where I should have tried to make him happy. Heaven, apparently, does not consider me worthy of repairing my faults, it has willed to deprive me of the fruits of my repentance."²

¹ Page 55.

² *Relations secrètes des Agents de Louis XVIII*, pp. 42, 43, 44. See as regards the Baron de Staél-Holstein the pages which Eug. Ritter devotes to him in his *Notes sur Mme. de Staél*, p. 67 and following. A very witty

On the death of M. de Staél, Benjamin Constant wanted to marry his widow. "She refused, or at least only consented on condition that she should not change her name; she wanted to make certain reservations in the contract, as a great writer in face of Europe and posterity; this was a proof of a poor sort of love. He was nettled by it; even then he no longer loved her."¹

Political complications increased Mme. de Staél's difficulties still more. The publication of Jordan's pamphlet, in July 1802, had excited the First Consul's anger against that group of which she was the centre. A month later Necker published, rather inopportunely, his *Dernières vues de politique et de finances*.² She herself, in December 1802, sent out her novel, *Delphine*.

The work had considerable success, as is well known.³ Satirical allusions and portraits were looked for by everyone, and Delphine was supposed to represent Mme. de Staél herself. Mme. de Vernon was M. de Talleyrand, who avenged himself by a very witty speech. "They say," he declared, "that Mme. de Staél has represented us both in her novel, herself and me, disguised as women."⁴ Benjamin Constant was supposed to be M. de Lebensei, and M. de Lucchesini was said to have served as a model for the Duc de Mendoce, the Comte Melzi for the Duc de Serbellane, and M. Necker for the father of Mme. de Cérèbe.

The question was, had Mme. Récamier a rôle in this novel? Mme. de Krüdener wrote to Camille Jordan: "I am reading Mme. de Staél's *Delphine*. Tell me if the character of Delphine is not a singular mixture of that of Mme. de Staél and of another person. Everyone is struck by it (the letter is from Lyons), everyone believes that in many ways she was trying to paint that other person. She describes her dancing

use is made there of a page borrowed from *L'Influence des Passions*. The certificate of death of M. de Staél has been published and commented on by Ch. Baille (*Revue de Paris*, April 1, 1902, p. 640). Compare Paul Gautier, *Mme. de Staél et Napoléon*, p. 81.

¹ Sainte-Beuve, *Cœurs du Lundi*, XI, p. 439.

² See Paul Gautier, *Mme. de Staél et Napoléon*, p. 87 and following.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 102 and following.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 103. See *Relations secrètes des Agents de Louis XVIII*, on the publication of *Delphine*, pp. 214, 215, 216.

and many of her features, but please do not say anything of this to her.”¹ There was no doubt about this for Mme. de Krüdener and her friends; the character of Delphine was “a mixture of the characters of Mme. de Stael and of Mme. Récamier.” On the contrary, one of Mme. de Stael’s most recent historians claims that Mme. Récamier is painted as Thérèse d’ Ervins.² M. Albert Sorel is sceptical as to the value of the “keys” to *Delphine*. “Mme. de Stael,” he writes, “made these likenesses as confusing as she wished, and it is useless curiosity to try to discover the models for them.”³ This certainly seems to be the most probable of the opinions given. Mme. de Stael, among many qualities, had the fault of not being clear. She wrote with enthusiasm, calling in turn upon her imagination and her memories, but particularly upon her imagination. She put herself on the scene, lent her characters her own feelings, ambitions, and her own ideal; but there is nothing, either in her correspondence or in the novel *Delphine*, which permits us to suppose that she has given a rôle in it to Mme. Récamier.

To make up for this Mme. Récamier had the honours of the theatre. The financial world was often represented there, it gave plenty of subjects.⁴ Picard, in 1801, gave an interesting piece on the financiers of the Consulate, entitled *Duhautcours, ou le Contrat d’union*. Duhautcours is represented as an “Organizer of bankruptcies.” A fête is given at the house of his confederate, Durville, the very evening before his failure is to be declared. Mme. Durville, a very frivolous woman, continues to trouble about nothing but dress. The piece was a great success. Étienne in *Le Pauvre Riche* took the same subject; the Germon ball is a parody on the fashionable balls of the time. On the 23rd of November, 1802, the *Agents de Louis XVIII*⁵ announced that the Louvois Theatre had been compelled to refuse a piece, *Les Eaux de Spa*, on account of an epigram intended for Juliette Récamier. M. Courtaut,

¹ Published in the *Correspondant*, 1898, CLV, p. 659.

² P. Gautier, *Mme. de Stael et Napoléon*, p. 103.

³ A. Sorel, *Mme. de Stael*, pp. 100 and 101.

⁴ See *La Comédie et les Moeurs sous le Consulat et l’Empire*, by C. M. des Granges (*Revue hist. lett. fr.*, 1899, p. 165 and following).

⁵ Pp. 174 and 175.

who represents her husband in this comedy, appears at Spa. Some foreigners ask after his wife, whether she is in Paris or travelling? "I do not know at all," he replies; "tell them to bring me the newspaper." In December of the same year, Chazet and Dupaty put on a vaudeville in one act, *Le Portrait de Juliette*, for Mme. Récamier's birthday.¹ She was soon tired of praises and criticisms of this kind. Without having any eminent faculties she deserved more than the title of "Queen of Fashion," at a time when fashion was far from being in accord with taste.

¹ Paris, Sale, year XI, 1803. This piece is indicated in the *Catalogue Soleinne*, Vol. III (No. 3572). We have not been able to find it.

CHAPTER V

MADAME RÉCAMIER IN THE OPPOSITION (1803—1804—1805)

Mme. de Staél's exile (Autumn, 1803); Mme. Récamier's rôle.—Exile of the Duc de Laval (January 1803).—Juliette's *salon* closed (February 1803).—What becomes of Chateaubriand.—Mathieu de Montmorency denounced.—Benjamin Constant and Juliette.—Camille Jordan and his correspondents.—Moreau's law-suit.—The Empire; places at Court.—Why Mme. Récamier is not disturbed.—Her detractors; Thiébault.—Her apologists; Kotzebue.—Mme. de Staél's travels.

MME. RÉCAMIER has herself explained, in a fragment that has been preserved of her *Mémoires*, how it came about that Mme. de Staél's exile in 1803 made her go over resolutely to the Opposition. "I had a passionate admiration for Mme. de Staél," she says. "The cruel and arbitrary act which separated us showed up despotism to me in its most odious aspect. The man who banished a woman, and such a woman, who caused her such suffering, could, in my opinion, only be a pitiless despot; from thenceforth I was entirely against him, against his accession to the Empire, against the establishment of unlimited power."¹

Certainly, when Mme. de Staél was obliged to leave, Mme. Récamier sent her the following note which Sainte-Beuve found in Camille Jordan's papers:² "Just as I received the note announcing your departure, a letter was brought to me from Junot, who writes as follows: 'I saw the Consul this

¹ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 78 and 79.

² *Nouveaux Lundis*, XII, p. 297 and 298. The original, belonging to M. Boubée of Lyons, is reproduced in *Mme. R. et les amis de sa jeunesse*, pp. 17 and 18.

morning; he told me that he consented to her remaining in France; he is willing even for her to reside at Dijon if this suits her; he even said to me quietly that if there were nothing fresh after this. . . . I hope that her own wisdom and our earnest entreaties will cause the phrase to be completed.' . . . You know all that, no doubt. As for me, I am obliged to hope to see you again soon by way of getting a little consolation for your absence. I beseech you to let me know your plans. I will not forget M.'s affair. It is very difficult to get used to no longer seeing you, after having the happiness of spending a few days with you. I shall await news from you anxiously and impatiently.

"Sunday evening.

"JULIETTE R."

Mme. de Staél's exile seems to have been decided, practically, ever since the beginning of 1803.¹ On the 9th of March, the *Agents de Louis XVIII* write:—"Some time ago it was announced that Mme. de Staél would soon arrive. It seems that she did intend to come to the capital again, in the belief, no doubt, that the anger of the Government had died away. She was mistaken, though. When her intention was known, a messenger was sent asking her to retrace her steps in case she was already on the way, and if not, to prevent her starting. The message had the desired effect, but we do not know the exact details. For more than three weeks no news has been received direct from her. Her friends hope that her exile will be over by next winter, but they may be mistaken. M. Necker's work, which is the true cause of this exile, has left on the mind of the First Consul an impression which will not be easily effaced."²

Mme. de Staél did nevertheless return to Paris, and she began her receptions once more. On the 6th of April, Mme. Degérando wrote to the Baronne Fritz de Dietrich as follows:³ "Camille [Jordan] is to bring Mme. de Staél and Mme.

¹ As regards the intercourse between Mme. de Staél and Napoleon before this exile see *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène*, II, p. 164 and following; V, p. 311 and following; VI, p. 410, and VII, p. 258. See also Jung. Lucien Bonaparte, I, p. 233 and following.

² *Relations secrètes des Agents de Louis XVIII*, p. 272.

³ Saint Ouen, *Lettres*, p. 193.



Maria Edgeworth

Récamier, who had intended to come and ask us to luncheon. It will be interesting to see the two women together who are making the most sensation in Paris, the one by her wit and the other by her beauty. . . . Your sister will have told you about an evening we both spent at Mme. de Staél's about ten days ago, but she will not have told you what a success she was herself. Mme. de Staél was delighted with her, and with her ease and grace; the men declared she was the prettiest woman there, and Mme. Récamier, Mme. Visconti, Mme. d'Aiguillon, Mme. Lucchesini and others were among the guests."

When, in the autumn, Mme. de Staél was definitely banished, Mme. Récamier, as we are told in *Dix Années d'exil*, offered her hospitality. Mme. de Staél went to live in the country at Juliette's house, two leagues away from Paris. It was whilst there that she took steps to bring about the revocation of her sentence, but her efforts were fruitless in spite of Junot's generous help. Mme. Récamier was living, that season, at the Château of Saint-Brice, which she had rented.¹ She was, therefore, a witness of her friend's despair. From that time forth, as she tells in the fragment of her *Mémoires*, she broke off decisively with Bonaparte and she listened to Bernadotte, who wished to curb Bonaparte's ambition. "Bernadotte's plan was," writes Mme. Récamier, "to organize a deputation, which both in numbers and names should be imposing, and to make Bonaparte understand that liberty had cost dearly enough to France, and that she ought now to keep it, and not make so many sacrifices serve for the elevation of one alone. I saw nothing in this but what seemed just and generous. He communicated to me a list of Republican generals on whom he believed he could count, but Moreau's name was missing on this list, and it was the only one that could be opposed to that of Bonaparte. I was on friendly terms with Moreau, and the two generals met privately at my house. They had long conversations together in my presence, but it was impossible to persuade Moreau to take any initiative in the matter."² We shall return later on

¹ See *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 78 and the note.

² *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 79.

to the subject of Mme. Récamier's intercourse with Moreau. Mme. de Staél could not make up her mind to leave Paris and to give up her efforts. She wrote to Juliette as follows :

“ Tuesday.

“ I am still here, Juliette dear, but I have nothing fresh to tell you. Every one is absent : I have written to Junot to beg him to use his influence for me so that I may stay only twenty leagues away. If you will add a few lines and tell him that I never said the stupid thing I am supposed to have uttered at your house, I shall have some hope. I am very unhappy. Was it necessary to be still fonder of you just when I had to leave you ? I shall wander about round Paris for the next three days, whilst awaiting this reply. Ah, what a fate ! When I get into a carriage I feel something of the same sensations that one must have on going to be executed. But I do not want you to share my suffering, although you are so good in sympathizing with me. My love to you. . . .” A postscript is added by Benjamin Constant : “ I am in despair that Mme. de Staél would answer you herself. I should have liked to write to you about a person whom you love, but now I can only repeat to you, Madame, expressions of a sentiment which you inspire too often to be able to take any notice of mine.

“ Respectful homage,
“ B. C.”¹

The *Relations secrètes des Agents de Louis XVIII* inform us, better perhaps than any other document, about the alternations of hope and discouragement experienced by the exiled woman.² To be compelled to go away was harder for her than one would have imagined. Her letters to Degérando from Maffliers prove this : “ I am alone here,” she writes in one of them, “ without any friends to keep up my courage, which is failing me. I beseech you to come and see me for a quarter of an hour this morning ; there is nothing you could do which would be such a consolation to a suffering

¹ Unpublished letter in M. Ch. de Loménié’s MSS.

² See pp. 419, 427, 428, 430 and 431.

creature.”¹ Finally she makes up her mind to it, and in October, 1803, she is at Metz, to which place she had been attracted by her wish to meet Charles de Villers again, the author of *L'Exposé de la philosophie de Kant*, who, later on, wrote an introduction for her book *De l'Allemagne*. She was accompanied by Benjamin Constant, and from there she went on to Weimar.² In February, 1804, she was at Weimar. The Duke then reigning and the Duchess Louise were most kind to her, and she met Goethe, Schiller and Wieland, and studied the new systems of philosophy and aesthetics, as she very wisely thought that, in order to give an idea of the character of the Germans and of their literature, a simple notion of their philosophical systems must first be presented. She made the best of life in spite of her exile, but she did not forget her beautiful friend. “A thousand kind messages,” she writes to Degérando on the 26th of February, 1804, “to Juliette, who still cares for me I hope, I talk of her with affection everywhere, and I say *everywhere*, for she is very celebrated.”³ Brought back to Coppet by circumstances that are well known, Mme. de Staél continued more actively than ever her correspondence with the friends who had courageously seconded her. On the 21st of July, she wrote Jordan the following letter from Coppet, which has never been published before and which depicts her state of mind at the time:⁴

“ You know, my dear Camille, that Mathieu is here and that he expects you before the 10th of August to return with him to Paris. Will it be any further attraction for you to come, if you know that I wish it as much as I can now wish for anything? In my letters to Mathieu, I called you and Gérando Pylade and Orestes and, through a misunderstanding, he thought that I was proposing that Gérando

¹ *Lettres publiées par M. Degérando* in 1868, pp. 57–58.

² *Ibid.*, p. 58 and following.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 62 and 63. See the studies by Joret in *Ann. fac. lettres Bordeaux*, 1899 and 1900, and in *Revue hist. litt. de la France*, Jan.–March 1902. See also the letters from Mme. de Staél to Mme. Necker de Saussure, published by P. Gautier, at the end of *Dix Années d'exil*; Paris, Plon, 1904.

⁴ This letter belongs to M. Boubée's collection (Lyons). We have added the punctuation.

should come to Italy with me. I had never thought of such a thing, but was repeating the idea which I should like so much of taking you there. Can you really refuse the opportunity, which may be your last one (if a continental war takes place), of seeing such a country! You would not be alone with me, as I am taking my three children and their learned tutor. It would be a deed of charity on your part towards a person who is suffering cruelly in a moral sense, and that is certainly a fine motive to give. You would have up to the 1st of November for going to Paris. I would call for you at Lyons if you liked and you would be back the 10th of May. Truly a speck of enthusiasm for Italy, and my friendship and misfortune ought to make you decide. Come and talk about it with me, do not refuse to listen to me. Adieu."

A little later she wrote to Mme. Récamier as follows :—

“COPPET, September 8th.

“I am giving M. de Montlausier a few words for you, my beautiful Juliette. I think he is very pleasant and it has made me think rather sorrowfully of the charm of conversation in Paris. I am beginning to get very sad from my exile and recent news, more particularly that from you, has made me more wretched than all the rest. Is Fouché still kindly disposed towards me and, if so, how is it that he makes difficulties about a few leagues more or less? My beautiful Juliette, whom I consider as my guardian angel and who is certainly as powerful on earth as he could be, try to get a distance authorized for me which would allow of my seeing you easily. That is what Paris means for me. Adieu, my love, and I am yours for life, if only my life can lend a little charm to yours.”¹

Adrien de Montmorency had preceded Mme. de Staél in exile. The *Agents secrètes de Louis XVIII* announce in January, 1803 : “The Duc de Laval has been exiled on account

¹ Unpublished letter in M. Ch. de Loménie’s MSS. Compare in the *Corresp. de Gouverneur Morris*, pp. 545 and 547, the two letters that Mme. de Staél wrote on the 16th August and the 16th October, 1804, from Coppet.

of a confidential letter in which he said, after examining what would happen in case we lost Bonaparte : ‘Who the deuce should we put in the place of that young rascal?’ It is a speech worthy of a sub-lieutenant of infantry and strange enough in the mouth of a duke and a peer.”¹

Finally, in February, 1803, Juliette’s *salon* was closed. She was treated though with consideration, and only her regular Monday receptions were forbidden. The *Agents secrètes de Louis XVIII*² attribute this disgrace, and not without great probability, to Mme. Récamier’s enthusiasm for Moreau, who was the hero of her assemblies. “Just lately particularly,” they tell us, “he has had such brilliant success there that nothing else has been talked of in fashionable circles. He was surrounded all the time by crowds of people and the most distinguished foreigners solicited the honour of an introduction to him.” It was towards this time that Stendhal met the fair Juliette. In a letter dated the 27th of Ventôse of the year XI (March 18, 1803), he says to Mounier : “I go every Tuesday to a house where Mme. Récamier comes. There is music, the mothers play at *bouillotte*, their daughters at other games, and they nearly always finish by dancing.”³

Several times about this date, 1802 and 1803, there were rumours circulated relating to the ruin or approaching ruin of Mme Récamier. The credit of the Paris market was shaken more than once. At the close of the year 1802, the *Agents de Louis XVIII* stated that the firm of Enfantin Brothers was bankrupt, that the firm of Récamier was on the list of failures and that it took advantage of the fall of its own shares to do good business by buying them in.”⁴ In August, 1803, there were fresh insinuations from the same informers. “The most disagreeable rumours were afloat a few days ago about the firm of Récamier. It was said that this millionaire had put his own house, his furniture, &c., under the name of his wife. It appears though that he can still go on.”⁵ The opinion of the royalists was, that the bankruptcies which were so numerous just then were the work

¹ *Rel. secr.*, p. 241.

² P. 249.

³ *Nouvelle Revue*, Vol. XXXVI, 1885, p. 248.

⁴ Pp. 208-209. Compare Laquainte, *Un hiver à Paris sous le Consulat*, p. 268 and following.

⁵ P. 387.

of Bonaparte, who feared lest the financiers should support a conspiracy and consequently only spared three houses: Perregaux, Baguenault and Récamier, firms which the *Agents de Louis XVIII* tell us¹ were completely devoted to the First Consul.²

In this unstable situation, already somewhat trying, Juliette would have been wise to conciliate a power, which was all the more susceptible as it felt less sure of having justice on its side. On the contrary, we shall see her from day to day getting more definite and uniting herself more closely with the boldest of the Liberals.

She had not seen Chateaubriand since the meeting at Mme. de Staél's. The author of the *Génie* had been appointed Secretary to the Embassy at Rome at the commencement of the year 1803. "What procured him that favour," write the *Agents de Louis XVIII*,³ was the double dedication of his book to the First Consul and to the Pope, and perhaps even more than all that the protection of Fontanes. When he was just ready to leave, he went to the famous banker, Récamier, and asked him for paper on Rome to the amount of a thousand French crowns. Récamier, as a patron of the fine arts, did not restrict himself to complying with this request, but gave him a letter for his correspondent in Rome in very much the following terms: "I am sending my friend, M. de Chateaubriand, to you and I hope you will do him all kinds of services: *He is a man of merit in his way . . .*" This expression which escaped the good-natured financier was much quoted later on in the *salons*.⁴ Chateaubriand was not to meet Mme. Récamier again until much later, on the Restoration of the Bourbons.

But Juliette continued to see Mathieu de Montmorency. He tried to persuade her into taking up some serious occupation. He would have liked her, for instance, to help

¹ P. 417.

² See *ibid.* some details, p. 367.

³ Relat. secr., pp. 376—377.—Compare Sainte-Beuve. *Chateaubriand et son groupe*, I, pp. 391—392, the text of the dedication of the second edition of the *Génie*, April, 1803.

⁴ *Les Agents de Louis XVIII* also give some curious details about a conversation of the Marquis de Chauvelin's at the house of Mme. Récamier in 1803, p. 408.

him in writing a work on the Sisters of Charity.¹ "The beautiful and kind woman" rather resisted this, whereupon among the letters from her director she received sermons on dress² and invitations to take advantage of time spent in the country to strengthen a reason that was still wavering,³ and to have recourse often to God's grace.⁴ At the close of 1803, Mathieu de Montmorency was denounced as a suspicious person to the new Government.⁵

Benjamin Constant about this time was working at his book on Religion. He had had the joy of finding ideas in accord with his own in the work by Villers, which the Institute had just crowned.⁶ Mme. de Staél's grief after the death of M. Necker kept her chiefly in Switzerland. "My friend's sorrow is so great," he writes on the 26th of May, 1804, "and is increased every day by a thousand memories, that I do not know, nor do I wish to know, when I shall be able to leave her."⁷ Nevertheless, when he went to Paris he was very assiduous in his attentions to Mme. Récamier. His *Journal intime* for the year 1804 mentions at least four soirées or dinners at Juliette's. He was not very kindly disposed towards Bonaparte, his disciples or his friends. He writes for instance, as follows: "I dined at Mme R[écamier]'s, where I met General Sébastiani. Conceited, cold, full of these general results that the so-called Machiavelists of the day are adopting as profound truths. It is a special school moulded by the master and a fairly exact imitation."⁸ Then again he writes: "I spent the evening at Mme. R.'s. It seems that I was very pleasant and agreeable, as I was complimented on this. This was a master-piece of my intelligence, for I was not at all in good form."⁹ A little further on he says: "I had supper at Mme. R.'s. It was very boring. The young men of this generation are too much given to sneering, and are really stupid."¹⁰ And then again:

¹ Letter No. 6 of M. Ch. de Loménie's collection (published in *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 47 and following).

² Letter No. 8, *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 48.

³ Unpublished letter, No. 11.

⁴ Unpublished letter, No. 12.

⁵ *Relations secrètes des Agents de Louis XVIII*, pp. 453-454.

⁶ *Essai sur l'esprit et l'influence de la réformation de Luther*, Paris, 1804.

⁷ *Briefe an Ch. de Villers*, pp. 5 and 6.

⁸ P. 103.

⁹ Pp. 107-108.

¹⁰ P. 108.

"I dined at Mme. R.'s. I met M. de Châteauneuf, who was always very friendly towards me. I saw *La Montansier* during the evening. What taste and what literature ! That explains everything."¹

Camille Jordan married² and remained in his own province, which he scarcely left again before the fall of the Empire. His retirement was his way of protesting against the establishment of the arbitrary man whom he had always fought. Thanks to him, by a frequent exchange of letters, Mme. Récamier kept up her intercourse with Mme. de Krüdener and the Duchess of Devonshire. In a letter dated January 28th, 1804, addressed to Camille Jordan, Mme. de Krüdener asked to be remembered to Juliette.³ The recommencement of war between France and England, in May, 1803, had not interfered with the friendly intercourse between Mme. Récamier and those who had been so hospitable to her in London. The Duchess of Devonshire, writing to Jordan on the 20th of July, 1803, says : "What a time this is and what a cruel war ! Peace was doing so much good. You will all be scattered now, and how my compatriots are being treated ! The dear, kind Juliette has written me a charming little letter. I dare not send you either gazettes or politics. Fox was in Parliament the other day. Grey is in the country ; Pitt, Fox and Windham all spoke on the same side the other night ; that is something fresh. Adieu adieu, kind friends, my excellent good friends. May we meet again !" ⁴ The whole of this society, to which Juliette from this time forth was attached, could not forgive the man whose ambition was now setting Europe on fire and destroying liberty in France.

It was in the Moreau affair, though, that Mme. Récamier compromised herself with the greatest daring. She really had an important rôle in this adventure, and it was not her fault if the affair did not succeed. Juliette had observed the

¹ P. 111.

² See his letter to Juliette in *Mme. Récamier et les amis de sa jeunnesse*, pp. 20 and 21.

³ *Le Correspondant*, 1898, Vol. CLV, p. 661.—Compare the letter of December 22, 1804. *Ibid.*, p. 672.

⁴ This letter has never been published. It belongs to the Boubée collection (Lyons).

increasingly hostile feelings of the conqueror of Hohenlinden towards the First Consul ever since his marriage with Mlle. Hulot, the young Creole friend of Josephine's, had placed him under the influence of an ambitious woman, and particularly since he had not been in active service. This dated from September 23rd, 1801, and his country-home at Grosbois, Seine-et-Oise, had become the refuge of malcontents. Moreau received both the republican solicitations of Bernadotte and the royalist solicitations of Mathieu de Montmorency, and Mme. Récamier, as we have seen, was friendly with both these men.¹ When, in January, 1804, Moreau had his interview with Pichegrus, Mme. Récamier had known for a long time what his intentions were. She tells all this herself in a fragment that has been preserved of her *Mémoires*. Ever since that famous day when Bernadotte had been so courteous to her, he had taken her into his confidence with regard to his fears and plans. During a ball at Mme. Moreau's, in the winter of 1803-1804, he told her of his great distress. "Moreau was passing by,"² writes Mmé Récamier, "Bernadotte called him and repeated to him all the reasons and all the arguments which he had ever used in order to persuade him: 'With a name that is popular,' he said, 'you are the only one among us who could present himself supported by all the people. Think over what you can do and what we can do; make up your mind now.'"

This account of Juliette's is one of the most interesting papers we have about the Moreau affair. Just as we see the General in Decaen's *Mémoires*,³ hesitating and uncertain, so we find him here. Juliette heard Moreau state his dread of civil war⁴ and refuse to start the conspiracy. She was present and "trembling," she tells us, when Bernadotte was furiously angry. Later on, when Moreau was included in the Georges Cadoudal and Pichegrus affair, she was "persuaded that he was as innocent of any conspiracy with them as with Bernadotte."⁵

¹ See the curious criticisms of Moreau in the *Relations secrètes de Louis XVIII*, p. 234 and following, pp. 264, 275 and following.

² *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 81.

³ See Dantenville, *Le Général Moreau*, Delagrave, 1899, pp. 146 and 147.

⁴ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 81.

⁵ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 82.

It seems as though Juliette must have been right, for nothing is less evident than any effective complicity between Bernadotte and Moreau. The Rennes conspiracy, related by Marbot,¹ by which Bernadotte and Moreau are said to have rallied round them the army of the Rhine, was not, as it were, put into execution. The historians who have known best all the details of the question did not believe in the conspiracy.²

As is well known, the First Consul caused Moreau to be arrested on the 14th February, 1804, and the trial, at which the General was arraigned, together with Georges Cadoudal, commenced on the 28th of May. Mme. Récamier gives the account of this, too.³ Thanks to her relative, Brillat-Savarin, she was able to go to the court of justice. Moreau recognized her and bowed to her. "I returned his bow," she said, "with emotion and respect." Juliette was "deeply moved to see this great Captain treated as a criminal," when she believed him innocent of any conspiracy. She admired the intrepidity of Cadoudal. The First Consul begged her, through Cambacérès, not to return to the court of justice in the interests of Moreau. She conformed to this request by obligation, but she remained with Mme. Moreau until his departure. After his condemnation, and before his exile in America, the General thanked her for her attentions in a letter which Mme. Lenormant gives.⁴ Fauriel, in the notes he left, completes Mme. Récamier's account.

"On the 17th of Ventôse," he says,⁵ "Moreau wrote to the First Consul. For several days everyone was anxious about this letter. The enemies of the General spoke of it as a document which was compromising as regarded the dignity of his character. It was known that the First Consul had given orders that it should be added to the papers connected with the trial. From this it was supposed that he was displeased by

¹ See Dantenville's discussion, p. 148 and following.

² Guillon. *Les Complots militaires sous le Consulat et l'Empire*, Paris, Plon, 1894.

³ See the fragment of her *Mémoires* in *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 103 and following. Compare Rondelet. *Éloge de Mme. R.*, p. 112.

⁴ *Souv. et Corr.*, pp. 108 and 109.

⁵ A work published by Lalanne on the *Derniers Jours du Consulat*, pp. 213-214.

it and, consequently, that Moreau had not lowered himself by what he had written. The history of this letter is connected with a detail, very insignificant in itself, namely, Mme. Récamier's visit to Réal. She was sent for by him to receive a reprimand for the freedom of her remarks on the subject of Moreau's arrest and other circumstances relating to the conspiracy. The object of this step taken by Réal was to inspire Moreau, through his wife, whom Mme. Récamier saw, with the idea of writing to the First Consul."

Whether Mme. Récamier did or did not, as early as 1804, give utterance to such decided sentiments of royalist fidelity and opposition as the expressions we find in the fragments of her *Mémoires*, it is certain that already at this time her devotion to Mme. de Staél, her intercourse with the de Montmorencys, with Jordan and Constant, marked her out for Bonaparte's hostility. She had only one more chance of escape. We will not describe the fever of servility which provoked, and seemed to authorize, the *sénatus-consulte* of the 18th of May, 1804. Jordan came to Paris to be present at the ceremony of the coronation, but on the way, at Nevers, where he had been stopped by the crowded roads on account of the Papal procession, he wrote a letter full of his bad temper and indignation.¹ Juliette saw "Bernadotte figuring at the coronation as Marshal of the Empire."² In the midst of the enthusiasm of the people, she also saw sudden conversions take place and shameful defections. She had the courage, which we must neither glorify nor depreciate, to remain faithful to her intimate friends in defiance of her most obvious interests.

Some of the old nobility rallied round Napoleon's throne.³ "Mme. de la Rochefoucauld, Josephine's first maid of honour, undertook to convert the Faubourg Saint-Germain. To the former maids of honour: Mmes. de Rémusat, de Talhouët, de Luçay, de Lauriston, the most illustrious names of France were added, and among others those of Mme. de Chevreuse (thanks it is true to her family), Mmes. de Mortemart, de

¹ This letter belongs to the Charavay collection of the Lyons Library.

² *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 110.

³ See Paul Gautier, *Mme. de Staél et Napoléon*, p. 166 and following.

Montmorency, de Bouillé, de Turenne, de Colbert, Octave de Ségur, etc. A Rohan was first almoner to the Empress; MM. de Courtomer, d'Aubusson de la Feuillade, her Chamberlains; the former had asked to be promoted as Colonel and a chamberlain's key had been offered to him instead.”¹

The Montmorencys resisted.

“A few days after Bonaparte had mounted the throne,” relates Adrien de Montmorency, “the Baron de Breteuil called together all the members of our family at his house, and communicated to us the orders of the new Emperor. These were to the effect that we were all of us, without exception, to enter his service in a career of some kind, and this on account of certain considerations which might have flattered our pride. The following day we met at the Tingry’s house and made a resolution never to appear at that Court and not to accept any office there. At this family council Mathieu spoke with such force that he brought the tears to our eyes.”²

Mme. Récamier made common cause with the de Montmorencys and Mme. de Staél. In the *Souvenirs et Correspondance* we have a long account of the way in which Napoleon endeavoured to get Juliette to belong to his Court. Fouché was very assiduous at Clichy. He helped Mme. Récamier in her interventions in favour of persons exposed to the severities of the Government. One morning, during a short conversation with Juliette, he reproached her respectfully with her opposition, which irritated the Emperor. He ventured to remind her of the Duchesse de Chevreuse, who had accepted the place of “Dame du Palais.” He was thanked and dismissed for his pains. On another occasion Fouché made more proposals, and endeavoured to find out what were the “real feelings” of Mme. Récamier with regard to the Emperor and, in spite of her declarations which were as plain as the proprieties allowed, he advised the friend of Mme. de Staél and of Moreau to ask for a place at Court. Mme. Récamier could not possibly accept such a thing. She gave all the excuses she could invent, eluded the skilful arguments of Fouché, who did not fear to

¹ P. Gautier, work quoted.

² Unpublished notice by Adrien de Montmorency. M. Ch. de Loménie’s MSS.

point out to her what might be the fortunate result of Napoleon's love for a "pure" woman. This was too much, and Fouché's third interview with Mme. Récamier, at the house of the Princess Caroline, only accentuated Juliette's repugnance. Most decidedly the Empress Josephine would not have had any cause for jealousy by seeing Mme. Récamier near the Emperor. The sole thing Juliette accepted was a seat in Mme. Murat's box at the *Français*, and she only took advantage of this twice. "Either by chance or intention the Emperor was present at both these performances, and his persistence was too obvious in turning his opera-glass on the woman in the box opposite him." The woman was Mme. Récamier. Fouché recommenced his negotiations for the fourth time, and this time in public and in the name of the Emperor. Mme. Récamier consulted her husband, which she might perhaps have done earlier. She was left free to act as she liked, and she refused for the fourth time. Fouché was furiously angry and his departure from Clichy was definitive.¹

In spite of the general protestations of the Imperialist historians² this story has never been contested. Sainte-Beuve believed it. He fancied that Fouché wanted to introduce an influential and devoted friend at Court.³ Villemain compares the Minister of Police to Mercure-Sosie with Alcmène.⁴ It is certain, though, that Mme. Récamier, watched as she may have been, was not directly interfered with during the first years of the Empire. There is a letter from her to a nephew in which she agrees to ask a favour from Napoleon. "As soon as your uncle is better," she writes, "I will see what is to be done in order to speak to the Emperor, either through M. de Montesquiou, or through the Minister of War, as I have friends who are on good terms with both of these men."⁵ She certainly owed this tranquillity and this kind of influence to

¹ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, pp. 111-120.

² See Fr. Masson, *Figaro illustré*, March, 1893, p. 55.

³ *Causeries du Lundi*, I, p. 128.

⁴ In the *Correspondant*, 1859, p. 218 and following. Compare P. Gautier, *Mme. de Staél et Napoléon*, p. 177, No. 3.

⁵ *Bibl. Nat.*: Autogr. of the Lefebvre collection, Vol. VII. Fr. Nouv. Acq. 1307. Letter dated only the 4th April.

the power of her friends. Fouché, who had been reintegrated in his former post on the proclamation of the Empire, and who, during the wars of Napoleon, was charged with keeping order in the interior, was too intimate with her, and he knew that she was too friendly with Mme. de Staél for him to think of beginning a persecution. Her fellow townsman, Degérando, too, protected her. In 1804 he had become Secretary-General of the Ministry of the Interior. It was he who was charged by Napoleon to introduce French administration into Tuscany, into the Roman States, and into Catalonia. Mme. Récamier often saw Degérando and his family. On the 25th December, 1805, Mme. Degérando wrote from Clichy to the Baronne Fritz de Dietrich : "I am here at a large house, visiting the beautiful Mme. Récamier, who really is a charming woman, and in many ways reminds me of others whom I love dearly, and who have often made me so vain."¹ Murat, who was also a friend of hers, had become a Marshal and Prince through the establishment of the Empire. His important rôle in the German campaign of 1805 had earned him great influence. Champagny, who was created Duc de Cadore in 1808, was appointed in 1804 Minister of the Interior and, on entering on his duties, had told his wife to assure Camille Jordan and his friends that he should remain devoted to their interests.² Finally, M. Récamier was doing business with the Government. He was furnishing supplies to the hospitals of the military divisions, and the moment had not yet come when the Emperor thought he could dispense with his services.³

Mme. Récamier did not suffer, therefore, as much as Mme. de Staél by the proclamation of the Empire. She had her enemies. Suchet, who was, nevertheless, a fellow-citizen of hers, welcomed the spiteful news that the scandal-lovers circulated.⁴ At Brünn, on meeting Thiébault, who was wounded, he told him a rumour that was enlivening the Paris *salons*. After a masked ball it was said that Mme. Récamier had

¹ *Lettres de Mme. Degérando*, p. 204.

² According to an unpublished letter of the Boubée collection.

³ Arch. Nat. *Minutes des décrets*. A.F. IV, p. 983. Decision of the Emperor in an affair between Récamier and the Managers of the military hospitals.

⁴ See *Mémoires de Thiébault*, III, p. 495 and following.

been surprised by Mme. Hamelin in a hired cab with M. de Montrond, "the greatest rascal in France." Suchet had the story from his brother, who in his turn had had it from report, so that it is easy to see what confidence is to be placed in such stories.

Juliette had her apologists also. Kotzebue came, or rather returned, to Paris in 1804.¹ This time he considered French society sympathetically, almost with admiration. In his two volumes of *Souvenirs* which appeared at Berlin that same year, with an engraving which represents the author visiting the tomb of Henry IV at Saint-Denis, accompanied by Juliette Récamier, Kotzebue praised this woman, who had become his friend, most enthusiastically. He protested strongly against the attacks of which she had been the object in the German papers. He had seen her for the first time at the Opera and then she had received him at her house with great simplicity, and he had gone to see her every day for several weeks. He noticed that she did not wear diamonds. "Amiability, grace and modesty," he says, "are the three graces that preside over her toilette."² He praises the simple way in which she received; he congratulates her on her kindheartedness. "She observes rigidly," he says, "in the midst of the whirlwind of Parisian society her wisely duties towards a worthy man who might have been her father (der ihr Vater sein könnte)."³ Even the most venomous slander has never ventured its attacks on this point. . . . In her friendship she is warm and perhaps a little enthusiastic, but she is none the less constant, as some of her old friends assured me. Nevertheless, as there must be some dark side to a picture, I will convict her of one small fault. Always prompt and ready to make great sacrifices for her friends, she does not willingly make small ones for them.⁴ As long as it is not a question of a friend's happiness, but only of his wishes, she will neglect these without any

¹ Rabany. *Kotzebue, sa vie et son temps*, p. 39 and following.

² P. 168.

³ P. 169.

⁴ "So rasch und willig sie ist ihren Freunden grosse Opfer zu bringen, so ungern bringt sie kleine. So lange nicht vom Glück des Freundes, sondern blos von seinen Wünschen die Rede ist, so lange erlaubt sie sich wohl zuweilen ohne Bedenken ihn zu vernachlässigen, um der Gesellschaft zu Liebe etwas zu thun, was sie fast immer ohne Neigung thut," p. 170.

scruples in order to do something for society's sake, and yet she does this nearly always without any real inclination."

Kotzebue defends Mme. Récamier wittily against the reputation of ignorance and stupidity which some of her enemies at that time were endeavouring to give her. "Certainly," he says, "if only those women are to be styled intelligent who handle philosophy as skilfully as a knitting-needle, who chatter about art with the most flowery rhetoric, who give their verdict without any reflection about the new literary productions and take sides with the various schools, then most assuredly Mme. Récamier is not an intelligent woman. She is not one of those women who attract attention by distributing to the different volunteer corps banners under which they themselves could not fight. But if sane intelligence, reason free from prejudice, an exact sentiment of all that is noble and beautiful—a willing mind open to all the beautiful truths of Nature and the agreeable seductions of Art, give a woman the right to be called intelligent, then Mme. Récamier is a very intelligent woman, and may it please God, for the sake of the happiness of all husbands and in the interest of feminine amiability, not to give us any women with more wit than she has!"¹

This pleasing portrait was known in France as early as 1805, through the translation that Guilbert de Pixérécourt published of the *Souvenirs de Paris*. Later on it was given more briefly by Monselet.² Kotzebue's book had great success in Germany, judging by the rapidity with which new editions were issued. As may be imagined, this pleasant intercourse with foreigners of such repute as Kotzebue brought down on Mme. Récamier the resentment of the Emperor and his Court. It was, though, more particularly her friendship with Mme. de Staél which did her the most harm.

In June, 1805,³ Mme. de Staél returned from Italy more desolate than ever, and always looked upon with suspicion by the Emperor. Napoleon tormented her unceasingly, set Fouché against her, and tried to animate M. de Barante, the

¹ P. 173.

² *Portraits après décès*, p. 145 and following.

³ P. Gautier, *Mme. de Staél et Napoléon*, p. 175.

Prefect of Geneva, with the same spirit, but the latter did not take easily to the rôle of persecutor. She spent the first month of 1806 at Coppet or Geneva¹ and, when she returned to France to finish and publish her novel, *Corinne*, it is from Mme. Récamier that she expected the most, either in the way of an attenuation of the severities laid upon her or consolation in the troubles about which she complains.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 178. M. H. Faure published in *La Revue*, Aug. 15th and Sept. 1st, 1903, two curious articles about *Mme. de Staél et le Duc de Palmella* according to two Portuguese works. D. Pedro de Souza, the future Duke de Palmella, the illustrious Portuguese statesman, knew Mme. de Staél at Rome in 1805. He was young then and comparatively unknown. She had just taken a fancy to Monti. Presently she composed with D. Pedro the plan of *Corinne*. For two years she made much of him; sent him poetry which was very second-rate and letters that are more interesting. "My dream," she says, "is that you should some day marry my daughter." More than once, in her correspondence with Mme. Récamier, D. Pedro is mentioned.

CHAPTER VI

INTIMACY WITH MADAME DE STAEL (1806—1807)

Steps taken by Mme. Récamier in favour of Mme. de Staël.—Letters from Mme. de Staël during her stay at Auxerre (up to Sept. 14th, 1806).—M. Récamier's ruin.—Death of Mme. Bernard (January 20th, 1807).—Letters from Mme. de Staël during her stay at the Château d'Acosta (up to April 21st, 1807).—The Comtesse de Boigne.—Prosper de Barante.—*Le Lis* by Eusèbe de Salverte.

THE years 1806 and 1807 in Mme. Récamier's history are of special interest, as they show us Juliette becoming more and more intimate day by day with Mme. de Staël. The letters from the exiled woman, during this period, form an almost complete diary of her wanderings, her "errors," and also of the sentiments which disturbed her ardent soul. There are few chapters more interesting in the history of the resistance to the persecutions of the Empire. With an energy that nothing could tame, a vitality and, so to speak, a force of expansion that nothing could crush, Mme. de Staël never ceased opposing her impenitent idealism to the materialism which was overwhelming her. It would have been interesting, in order to describe the various phases of this struggle, to have had the letters from Juliette, too. They are missing, and we shall only hear, therefore, in this ceaseless duet the voice that was the stronger of the two. But Mme. de Staël's explicit confidences show us the rôle that Mme. Récamier was playing with regard to her. In these circumstances, as all through her life, Mme. Récamier, with a delicacy of intuition truly appreciable, restricts herself to the functions for which her faculties had marked her out. On a stage where energies

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superior to her own came into contact, where there was talent with which she could not attempt to compete, she did not attempt to take the chief parts. She was ready to fill to perfection that rôle of confidant in which she was inimitable. The affection that she inspired induced the men or women who wrote to her to express themselves in all the varieties of their sentiments or their ideas. Thanks to her, we can now know details which, without her, would have remained hidden from us. History, which is necessarily indiscreet, takes advantage of all this. This happy intervention is to the honour of Mme. Récamier. We must not exaggerate it, but it is only just to acknowledge it.

On the 19th of April, 1806, as Barante informed the police, Mme. de Staël with her two children and their professor, Schlegel, started for Auxerre.¹ The Prefect of Leman attested that her conduct at Geneva and in the suburbs, during the year she had spent there, had been "very reserved and very circumspect." "When leaving this town," added Barante, "it seemed as though she intended to give it up entirely, as the climate did not agree with her daughter. She had given out besides that, as she had some important money matters to attend to, she must get as near Paris as she could." On the 28th of April, the Prefect of the department of Yonne informed the police that Mme. de Staël had been to him, and that she was going to settle down at Vincelles, three leagues beyond Auxerre, at the house of a Swiss banker named Bidermann. She had again asked for permission to return to Paris. On the 13th of May, the same Prefect wrote that Mme. de Staël "found it dull" in the country and was looking for a house at Auxerre; and that Mathieu de Montmorency had been to see her. The Emperor again sent her word not to come nearer to Paris than the limit fixed of forty leagues.²

Mme. de Staël was not to leave Auxerre before the 14th of September for Rouen.³ In the meantime she asked for and obtained permission to go to Spa; but this permission was

¹ See P. Gautier, *Mme. de Staël et Napoléon*, p. 181.

² See the documents borrowed from the Archives Nationales in *La Censure sous le premier Empire* by H. Welschinger, p. 334 and following.

³ Gautier, work quoted, p. 183.

followed immediately by an order given to the Prefect of Ourthe to have her watched, but at the same time to respect her *sex* and her *merit*.¹

Mme. Récamier was entrusted in Paris with the steps that Mme. de Staél persisted in taking, in order to be able to return to the Faubourg Saint Jacques. She counted a great deal on Fouché, as the following letter proves :

“ AUXERRE, 27th of April [1806].

“ Allow me, my dear Juliette, to send to you an intimate friend of mine, the Comte de Souza, whom you will like I am sure, as there is a great deal of analogy between all who are dear to me. Tell me whether you will get me away from here through Fouché, drive it into his head that I want to go to the Faubourg Saint-Jacques and to see no one but you and Mathieu. But am I not to see you, for I do so need to embrace you with all my heart ! I am sixteen hours' distance from you here. The Comte de Souza is a young Portuguese, whom I saw every day at Rome and whose mind and character are remarkable.² You can talk to him about me as you would to Camille or Gérando. Say a kind word from me to Adrien. I should so much like to see him again—And you—you ! ”³

Juliette was also requested to receive anyone in Paris who came from Mme. de Staél, her younger son, or Schlegel, the children's professor.

“ May 8th.

“ Dear Juliette, your goodness to me is inexhaustible, but shall you never give me the unspeakable pleasure of seeing you again ? I am sending you my younger son,⁴ who is quite in love with you, like the rest of his family. Do treat M. Schlegel well, he is more my friend than the tutor of my children. I have permission to stay here, but I cannot stay long, as it is the most dismal life imaginable. There is not a single resource for the education of the children, not one

¹ Welschinger, work quoted, pp. 337 and 338.

² See the note at the end of the preceding chapter.

³ Unpublished letter in M. Ch. de Loménie's collection. Address : Madame Récamier, Rue du Mont-Blanc. ⁴ Albert.

musician, nothing in the world but the river and the plain, and my imagination is too melancholy to stand it. Help me out of this if you can. Is not Marshal Murat in Paris? Could you not interest him in me? I know how you do interest people in me. I would rather have it done indirectly through you than directly by myself. Adieu, beautiful Juliette, I am finishing as I commenced by asking you to arrange for me to see you. Remember me to Adrien."¹

Degérando too was asked to intervene. Mme. de Staël wrote to him on the same date, May 8th, 1806, as follows: "I can understand that no one could take exception to a prison like this, but there is not a soul to be seen anywhere, not a single resource, it is a veritable Scythia.² The exiled woman asked Degérando to go and see Talleyrand and get him to give a letter from her to the Emperor. She wanted her friends to make one last effort on the occasion of the fête of the 15th of August." Mme. Récamier announced her approaching departure for Auxerre, and Mme. de Staël thanked her in the following letter.

"*Sunday.*³

"Dear Juliette, I only received your letter yesterday. When you come you will be an angel here more than anywhere else. I should like to see Adrien. Could you not have Albert for a chaperon or M. Schlegel? How has Fouché got hold of the idea that I have bought anything here? I shall take care not to do so. What a pleasure it will be to see you again."

Mathieu de Montmorency, who was installed at Vincelles, wrote on the 10th of May to Mme. Récamier to give her the necessary information, just as she was about to start on her journey. He blamed, in rather an amusing way, the office for the examination and reading of letters, for its slowness in the accomplishment of its functions. One passage particularly is curious in his letter. It is the one in which he declares that he is against Adrien de Montmorency's going

¹ Our text is like the MS. This letter was published by Mme. Lenormant in *Coppet et Weimar*, pp. 25 and 26.

² *Lettres . . .* published by Degérando, p. 64 and following.

³ Unpublished letter. Address: Madame Récamier. M. Ch. de Loménie's collection.

there. "Nothing," he says, "would give me greater pleasure than to see him, to have him here in such agreeable and delightful society. Our friend is very anxious for him to come. She has already tried to persuade me about it, and she says that the society of the young man and of the Mentor¹ would make it more easy and more correct, but I still fear that this would not be the case. My reason holds out against my inclination and I conclude, in spite of myself and conscientiously, that there would be inconveniences which Adrien's delicacy must see, even against his own inclination."² These scruples displeased Mme. Récamier, perhaps, but what really prevented her from starting was the serious illness of her mother, Mme. Bernard. Hence the following letters from Mme. de Staél :—

[1806].

"I am forwarding you two more letters by this post, dear friend, which have been sent to you here by people who think I am more fortunate than I really am. I am awaiting your news all the time with an anxiety that is difficult to express. I am here in the little inn at Auxerre, only getting a few hours' sleep by means of opium, and starting every time I hear a driver's whip. This state of things must come to an end. Send back François as soon as possible, and if the beautiful saint has been able to get some relief for me. . . . The idea occurred to me that I would write to Murat or to Sébastiani, but on thinking it over it seemed to me that your words would be more efficacious than my letters, that more attention would be paid to them. With fondest love. Give me some news of Mme. Bernard.³

"May 30th."

"AUXERRE, 13th of June [1806].

"Enclosed, my dear and perfect friend, is a letter for Murat, which I beg you to send to him *at once* after reading it only yourself. Please ask for a reply in a few days, as it is impossible for my torture to last more than another week.

¹ Albert de Staél and Schlegel.

² Letter No. 13 of the collection of M. de Montmorency's letters. See *Mme. Récamier et les amis de sa jeunesse*, p. 21 and following.

³ Unpublished letter. No Address. M. Ch. de Loménie's MSS.

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Let me know, too, yourself upon whom I depend. If you go to Plombières, let me know so that I may go with you. I should like to join you on the way; tell me at what town I could do so. If you were threatened with so cruel a misfortune what should you do? Should you go to Lyons or should you stay in Paris? Should you go to Mme. de Catelan's and would she let me go to her? Anyhow, let me know in what way my devotion to you, which is nothing in comparison with what you do for me, but still this devotion is all I have, in what way can it be of use to you. Answer me, dear friend, for I have had no letter from you for a week.”¹

“ June 19th [1806].

“ No, my dear Juliette, I cannot make up my mind to go away as long as you are in this cruel anxiety. If a misfortune were to happen to you, perhaps you would come to me or you would make an appointment with me somewhere, anyhow I cannot make up my mind to go away as long as you are suffering. Oh, God, if you could only obtain for me the good fortune of being with you through these cruel moments!

“ I am waiting with impatience to hear what M.² says to you. Do not miss a post without sending me just a line. I am so anxious about you and about myself. Prosper³ will have been to see you. Tell him that you care for me; it seems to me that the best thing I have to show is your affection for me. Thanks to Benjamin's most generous visit here I am trying to remain, but in such a state of uncertainty the hours and even the minutes are painful.

“ M. Schlegel wishes to be remembered to you. He says that you are an angel! This is not the first time that has been said.”⁴

Whilst Mme. Récamier in Paris was serving as intermediary to Mme. de Staël for her political affairs, Camille Jordan was useful to her at Lyons for her money matters. She wrote to him from Auxerre, on the 20th of June, as follows:

¹ Unpublished letter in M. Ch. de Loménié's MSS.

² Murat.

³ De Barante.

⁴ Unpublished letter, without any address. M. Ch. de Loménié's MSS.

"Messrs. Reyne, bankers at Lyons, have some money of mine which they offer to reimburse. Will you, my dear Camille, ask your brother if he will give me 6 per cent. on twenty thousand pounds as a current account? I will have it paid in on the 18th of next September. I want your answer about this at once. I think you are mistaken about Chateaubriand's publisher. According to what he said to me, he very much wishes to print one of my works; anyhow, if it does not suit him to do so, I have a thousand and one ways of having it printed elsewhere."¹

Madame Bernard's illness prevented Mme. Récamier from starting as she had promised for Vincelles, and from writing as often as her friend would have liked. Mme. de Staél complained of this in her letters.

"You promised me, my sweetheart," she writes, "to let me know what the p.m. said of my letter and if he had (*something missing*) about me; I am wretched about your silence for several posts. You know how hard it is for me to stay here and how much I need to have news by every post about your mother and about you, of whom I am thinking all the time. With fondest love, begging you not to forget me.

"June 24th, Vincelles."²

"AUXERRE, 30th of June [1806].

"Is it true, dear Juliette, that you have the sweet intention of coming to see me again before the 1st of August? If you have that sweet idea, come with Mathieu and *not with Prosper*, who will stay two days and take up the time that I should want to give to you. Make use of Auguste, too, as your knight. You know that my last hope is to try for the fête. After that I shall go away, I do not know where, but I shall neither attempt nor hope for anything else. Do you think that Junot will be back for that? Give me some news

¹ This fragment is the commencement of the letter quoted by Sainte-Beuve. *Nouveaux Lundis*, XII, p. 304. The original is in the Boubée collection at Lyons.

² Unpublished letter in M. Ch. de Loménié's collection. Address: To Madame Récamier, Rue du Mont-Blanc, Paris. The post-mark is June 26, 1806.

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of your mother, you have not written to me for a long time. Benjamin has been most generous as far as I am concerned. Do be kind to him when he comes. I make use of you for rewarding those who care for me.”¹

“July 12th.²

“I very much want you, dear Juliette, to come and see me as soon as possible, as I am leaving Vincelles on the 1st of August, since the last attempt I shall make to spend my life with you will be on the 15th of August. I should like to talk about it with you, and it seems to me as though that would bring luck to this last serious venture. You had made such a fine plan of coming to Vincelles with your friends, how is it that I hear nothing more about it? If you knew how dreadful this month of suspense is to me, you would come and cheer it by your angelic presence. Adieu, dear friend, you complain of my short letters, but I can only tell you the stray thoughts that wander about in my brain, which is rather hazy from the effect of opium. I love you and I am unhappy and should like to see you again, perhaps for the last time. I cannot write all that I want to say to you.”³

In spite of Benjamin Constant’s visits to Vincelles, Mme. de Stael, about this time, began to have a strong liking for Prosper de Barante. His father, M. de Barante, then Prefect of Leman, was very unhappy at Geneva, where he had no friends, although he was greatly respected. Mme. de Stael asked Degérando, who was then Secretary-General of the Ministry of the Interior, to move him to Orleans. As to Prosper, he was then about twenty-five years old, and Mme. de Stael had, from the first, been struck by his intelligence. “No man certainly of his age,” she wrote, “is so clever and talented.”⁴ Prosper left Vincelles and went to Spain. The

¹ Unpublished letter. M. Ch. de Loménié’s MSS. Address: Madame Juliette Récamier, Paris.

² E. Ritter in *Notes sur Mme. de Stael*, p. 65, mentions another letter of the same date. In this Mme. de Stael speaks of two millions that she has demanded from the Treasury. He refers to the *Revue des autographes*, No. 87.

³ Unpublished letter in M. Ch. de Loménié’s collection. Address: Madame Juliette Récamier, Rue du Mont-Blanc. Paris.

⁴ *Lettres . . .* published by Degérando, pp. 67 and 68.

banished woman started for Spa;¹ but at Auxerre Schlegel was taken ill and the journey was interrupted. She wrote about this to Mme. Récamier.

“AUXERRE, August 16th.

“Imagine the situation I am in, my dear Juliette. I was on the way to Spa when, at Auxerre, M. Schlegel was taken ill, and at the same time I heard that Mathieu had the fever in Paris. So here I am in despair at not being in Paris, and mortally anxious at having a man I like, ill, in an inn without a doctor. I am suffering so bitterly with all these troubles that I am nearly dead myself. Write to me and send me a few words of consolation. Did you see Pr. before he started for Spain? M. de Souza and M. de Sabran, as well as Benjamin, are most devoted here to the saddest person in the world. Ah, I should like to know what harm it could do to the Emp. not to keep me here on the rack. Adieu, dear friend, at least may you be happy.”²

The letters which follow these are still more interesting. Towards the end of August, 1806, Mme. de Staél and Mme. Récamier plan to buy a house between them where they could meet. But the most curious detail to note, in these letters, is the progress of Mme. de Staél’s passion for Prosper de Barante. It is noticeable in a most touching phrase of the long epistle dated from Fontaine-Française. Also, from certain congratulations and certain recommendations, we are led to imagine that Mme. Récamier’s life, at this time, had become rather less tranquil than in the past, and that her heart was not so calm. Mme. de Staél left Auxerre in the middle of September. If we are to believe an indication in the *Journal intime de Benjamin Constant*,³ Mme. Récamier went to see her. Her stay at Vincelles could not in any case have been a very long one. Mme. de Staél’s letters, those that are dated, followed each other at very short intervals. (April 27th, May 8th, May 30th, June 13th, June 19th, June 24th, June 30th, July 12th, August 16th.) Mme. Récamier went to Auxerre, most probably, at the end of

¹ Gautier, work quoted, p. 183.

² Unpublished letter in M. Ch. de Loménie’s collection.

³ P. 114.

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July. The beginning of the letter dated June 30th gives rise to the supposition that she paid two visits during her friend's sojourn there. Before starting for Rouen Mme. de Staël wrote her these two letters :

“ Friday.

“ My anxiety about Mathieu’s health makes me send again to Paris before leaving for Spa, my dear Juliette, and I am taking advantage of this opportunity to give my notary the authorization to buy, but we must not mention it, as the price asked is too much in comparison with the rent. Good heavens, how delighted I am with this purchase in partnership with you. Do not say that I am going there, say on the contrary that it is money I have placed with you, and that on returning from Spa, from Cologne, or from the other end of the world where I am going, I shall return to your, or rather our house. The idea of this delights me. It gave me the only pleasant moments I had at Vincelles. Remember me very kindly to your mother. I shall try to make her like me in this partnership affair. I am anxious about your situation ; everyone is talking about it. You are a prize now for a man’s pride as much as for his love. Take care, dear friend, are you in love enough to be happy ? My preaching is limited by this simple reflection. Ah, you are sure of being loved at any rate ! ”¹

“ FONTAINE FRANÇAISE,

“ Saturday, September 6th [1806].²

“ It is a very long time since I saw you, dear friend, and a very long time since I heard anything of you, and I am anxious about your mother’s health, and about everything that concerns your lot in life. Write to me at my Paris address, 103, Rue de Lille, as I am so uncertain about my route that I cannot give you any other address. I hope you will come to see me when I am settled somewhere. We must talk by letter. I cannot hear anything about you. What am I to

¹ Unpublished letter in M. Ch. de Loménié’s collection. Address : Madame Récamier.

² This letter bears the post-mark, Sept. 12, 1806.

tell you about myself? I am here to kill the time that Benj[amin] is spending in Paris, and M. Schlegel's health rather worries me, as he is far from being himself again. Prosper has written to me that he shall be in Paris on the 8th of September. He will go to see you. Encourage him in a sentiment which, alas, is only too necessary to me still. And you, what about your heart? It makes me sad that you did not feel the need of writing to me about all that. It seems to me that if you loved me you would have written to me as though we were talking. There is a young man, M. de la Charce, here, who says he knows you. He talks about you as I like to hear you talked of. M. and Mme. de la Tour du Pin are here, and M. de Sabran, who follows me about so much that we shall have to quarrel if we are to separate (this is between ourselves). The Chevalier de Boufflers is expected, but I shall start the minute Schlegel is better, and I shall say adieu to Dom Pèdre. This indefinite separation with him, after he has shown me so generous a friendship, will give me great pain. I am ending as I began, for I like to repeat things when it is a question of sentiment. Write to me, tell me about yourself, and do not forget me. I wander round that Paris, where you are, like a wretched planet which can neither approach nor get away from its centre. When will all this end! I venture to send you my love, beautiful Juliette."¹

Juliette, in her turn, was about to need consolation.

During the winter of 1806—1807 Mme. Récamier had two great troubles which, in her eyes, were of very unequal importance, namely, her husband's ruin and her mother's death.

M. Récamier's affairs had not been prosperous since the Consulate. They had suffered greatly through a financial crisis in Spain at that time. The Minister of the Treasury, Barbé-Marbois, hastened on the failure by refusing to lend the banker one or two millions. M. Récamier drew great displeasure on himself for having given a fête at Épinay-sur-Seine, on the 2nd of November, 1806, at which, among other

¹ Unpublished letter in M. Ch. de Loménie's collection. Address : Madame Juliette Récamier, Rue du Mont-Blanc, Paris.

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guests, the sub-director of the bank, the "trustee for the creditors" of the bankruptcy, was present.¹

For several months past, as a matter of fact, the public had been concerned with regard to the Récamier Bank and, as might be expected, opinions differed. There is a curious document to be seen at the Bibliothèque Nationale, which was published in Paris by a certain Darragon, and dated December 7th, 1805.² It is entitled, *Le Dire sur M. Récamier, banquier de Paris, ou l'infortune aux prises avec l'opinion publique.* (The allegations about M. Récamier, Paris banker, or misfortune struggling with public opinion.) This pamphlet was very favourable to the unfortunate man of business. We have seen how unfavourable the *Agents de Louis XVIII* were to him.

The particulars relating to the Récamier failure have been kept.³ We learn from these that in 1806, on the 11th of February, before the judges of the Tribunal of Commerce, Sieur Gorneau, attorney, appeared, "requesting the Court to appoint whomsoever it thought fit to proceed with the examination, verification, and affirmations of the debts filed on the schedule by him,"⁴ and, deposited at the registrar's office of the Court on the 1st of February, 1806." M. de Catellan was a creditor for the amount of 126,424 francs 77. M. Récamier's house, No. 7, Rue du Mont-Blanc, Paris, was estimated at 360,000 francs, from which the seller's mortgage had to be deducted. M. Necker was the seller, and this was valued, with the arrears due, at 160,000 francs, plus Mme. Récamier's claim, which was 200,000 francs. There was nothing to be counted on, therefore, from the house in the Rue du Mont-Blanc for the creditors. The house at Épinay belonged to Mme. Récamier and was valued at 45,000 francs. On the 10th of January, the money in hand amounted to about 819,000 francs and the securities were estimated at 361,000 francs. The current account debtors

¹ Frédéric Masson, *Figaro illustré*, March, 1893, p. 54. See Thiers, *Histoire du Consulat et de l'Empire*, Vol. VI, from page 186, and particularly page 199. Sainte-Beuve, *Causeries du Lundi*, I, p. 133.

² In -8°, printed by Cramer. Bibl. Nat. Ln²⁷ 17098.

³ Archives of the Consulate of Paris. Schedules. Carton 103 of the Archives of the Seine.

⁴ By Jacques Récamier.

were inscribed for 1,053,976 francs 95. M. Récamier's furniture was estimated at 50,000 francs. The creditors by current accounts or funds lent represented about 6,800,000 francs. In brief, M. Récamier's assets were fixed at 8,240,630 francs 30, and his liabilities were 9,609,681 francs 17.

It was necessary to quote these few figures, taken from an imposing bulk of papers, in order to show precisely the nature and importance of a failure which has been judged in such different lights. It will be noticed that with regard to the assets of the Récamier firm, Mme. Récamier's claims, valued at 200,000 francs are as follows: "Dowry 60,000 francs Rise 60,000 francs 4,000 francs income of the marriage settlement; capital 80,000."

Thibon, chief sub-Director of the Bank of France; Doumerc, a Paris banker, and Fould, also a Paris banker, were appointed trustees and proxies for the whole of the creditors of the Récamier firm. The house undertook to pay 35 per cent. of the debts. It paid this, and an additional dividend even was claimed by the creditors. This additional and definitive dividend was fixed at $6\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. The reduction, therefore, granted to the Récamier firm was $58\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of the capital.

It was not until the 26th of January, 1809, that Jacques Récamier could take up again the complete management of his affairs. The public announcement of this fact can be seen in the newspapers of that time.

M. Récamier was overwhelmed by this catastrophe, which ruined, besides his own firm, several firms that were dependent on his.¹ However it may have been, whether he was imprudent or simply a victim of circumstances, one thing cannot be contested, namely, the fact that his young wife, hitherto so accustomed to luxury, now showed the greatest energy, very much wisdom, and perfect resignation. The house in the Rue du Mont-Blanc, together with all the silver and jewellery, was put up for sale and, whilst waiting for purchasers, the charming Juliette let her furnished flat to

¹ See on this event, *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 125 and following.

Prince Pignatelli, the younger brother of the Comte de Fuentès.¹ The house was not sold until September 1st, 1808.² There is no doubt but that Napoleon's personal grievances against Mme. Récamier accounted in part for his hardness in allowing her husband to go under in his failure. Villemain noted shrewdly the change that these circumstances brought about in Mme. Récamier's life and friendships, the rupture with the official world, and the kind of sympathy which it engendered among the men of the old régime; the increased respect which the more delicate natures prided themselves on showing her, and finally the curiosity, more often kindly but in some cases spiteful, which induced illustrious foreigners to seek her out and make her acquaintance. From thenceforth Mme. Récamier and her friends broke entirely with the Imperial Court. "We have then here," as Villemain very justly writes,³ "French society seen on a second plane, a society of leisure and of independent thought in this busy century; a society of elegant simplicity and of witty grace under the reign of the sword, and of algebra. It was not precisely the opposition; there was no opposition under the Empire; but there were those who were suspected, who were out of favour, and very soon destined to be persecuted."

Mme. de Stael was the soul of this group. On receiving the news of the misfortune which had come upon her friend, she wrote her a long letter, dated November 17th, 1806, full of the most loving protestations, and the most hopeful encouragement.⁴ "A beauty unequalled in Europe," she says, "a stainless reputation, a proud and generous disposition, what a wealth of happiness yet in this wretched life where you have been so despoiled! Dear Juliette, let our friendship be closer still; it must not only be generous services, which have all been on your side, but let us write regularly, let us tell each other our thoughts, let us have a

¹ See about Prince Alphonse Pignatelli, *Coppet et Weimar*, p. 79, No. I.

² To M. Mosselmann.

³ Art, quoted from the *Correspondant*, 1859, pp. 220-221.

⁴ The original of this letter no longer exists. M. Ch. de Loménie has a copy of it. It was published in *M.O.T.* (edit. Biré, IV, p. 408 and following) and in *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 129 and following.

life together!" And Benjamin Constant, in his diary, writes down: "I have just heard of M. Récamier's bankruptcy. Another of my friends to suffer. Does misfortune only fall on all who are good in the world?"¹

Camille Jordan was not one of the least affected. His condolences arrived before those of Mme. de Staél.² He would have come himself to console her had he not known that she was surrounded by friends. "But," he adds, after his expressions of sympathy, "I am told that all the consolations that friendship and opinion can give are lavished upon you, and it is only right that those who were always so kind and generous in prosperity, so sensitive to every sort of misfortune, should excite such universal and profound interest. I am told, too, Juliette, specially, that you are a model of courage, resignation and disinterestedness; that it is you who comfort and encourage your husband. I admire you, but I am not surprised. I see once more in you the woman, whose superiority and nobility under frivolous appearances always struck me, and on whom misfortune was to set the last seal of perfection."³

Dégérando was very much affected. Bernadotte, who was in Germany, and had just been wounded in the head by a bullet, sent her a very affectionate letter, but the extreme tender-heartedness of the Marshal appears to be a trifle emphasized.⁴

Junot, who called Mme. Récamier his *dear sister*, wanted to try to remedy the disaster. He had just, in this year 1806, after his embassy in Portugal, been made Governor of Paris, a post which had been taken from him three years previously. His proposals now to Napoleon only met with ill-humour and the most brutal refusal.⁵ According to certain historians the Emperor's reply to Junot was more than brusque. "I am not Mme. Récamier's lover," he is said to have exclaimed, "and I do not come to the rescue of business men who run a house at the rate of 600,000 francs a year. Remember this,

¹ *Journal intime de Benj. Constant*, p. 115.

² His letter is dated Oct. 28th.

³ See the entire letter in *Mme. R. et les amis de sa jeunesse*, p. 31 and following.

⁴ See *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 132 and *Catalogue de la vente Récamier*, No. 15.

⁵ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 131.

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Monsieur Junot ; remember that the Treasury does not lend to people who, as it knows, have been bankrupt for a long time ; it has plenty of other uses for its money."¹

Juliette did not leave the proofs of sympathy she received unanswered. She wrote to Camille Jordan : "The attachment of my friends keeps up my courage."² She said to Mme. Degérando : "I am very much touched by the interest you take in my sorrows ; your friendship has always been one of my sweetest consolations. Dear Annette, I have great need of consolation, my heart has been torn by so many sentiments."³ One of the details which affected her the most was the obligation forced upon her by circumstances of renouncing, at least partially, the keeping up of a school for girls which, with M. and Mme. Degérando, she had founded in the parish of St. Sulpice.⁴ As for the rest, she gave up society "without complaining" and, according to Chateaubriand's happy expression, she seemed from henceforth "made for solitude as much as for society."⁵

Mme. Bernard died on the 20th of January, 1807. M. Récamier's ruin had hastened her end. Up to the very last she had been careful of her beauty and had liked dress. Mathieu de Montmorency wrote Mme. Récamier a letter full of sincere and deep feeling ; Mme. de Stael did not fail to send her dear friend a few words of ardent affection.⁶ Jordan repeated his expressions of faithful attachment.⁷ Juliette, according to Mme. Lenormant, "spent the first six months of mourning for her mother in perfect retirement, and the intensity of her sorrow seemed to affect her health."⁸ It was to Mme. de Stael's friendship that she appealed for the comfort and compensations she needed.

¹ Fred. Masson, *Figaro illustré*, March, 1893.

² *Mme. R. et les amis de sa jeunesse*, p. 33.

³ Letter of October, 1806, with Mme. de Stael's postscript. Degérando, *Lettres inédites*, pp. 13 and 14.

⁴ See *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 122 and following, and Brillat-Savarin, *Physiologie du goût*, 2nd edit. II, p. 249 and following.

⁵ *M.O.T.*, IV, p. 410.

⁶ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 136 and following.

⁷ *Mme. R. et les amis de sa jeunesse*, pp. 34-35.

⁸ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 139.

Mme. de Staél had left Auxerre on the 14th of September for Rouen.¹ She soon after settled at the Château d'Acosta, near Aubergenville (Seine-et-Oise), where she lived until April 21st, 1807.² She was disturbed more than once during this short space of time. In March she bought the Château de Cernay, near Franconville, four leagues from Paris.³ The Prefect of Seine-et-Oise received orders to prevent her establishing herself there. She protested, declaring that she "should be compelled to give up France if she could not live at a place where, for the education of her children, she could count upon the resources of the capital." She asked for permission to live at Cernay, and this was refused her. On the 8th of April she received orders to leave. In reply to this order she wrote a very energetic letter to the Prefect of Seine-et-Oise, asking for a certain delay. "Until then," she says, "that is the 25th of this month, I have no way of leaving, and unless force is used I shall not start."⁴

Mme. de Staél had been followed to Rouen by Benjamin Constant, Elzéar de Sabran, Guillaume and Frédéric Schlegel, and it was at the Château d'Acosta, where she was not in her own house, as the police reports had said,⁵ but in the house of her friend, Mme. de Castellane, that she finished the composition of *Corinne*. As is well known, this visit of the exiled woman was the subject of rather amusing contentions between Napoleon and Fouché. The Emperor was congratulating himself on hearing no more about her, "the raven which lived on intrigues and folly." The police report of the 27th of April stated that Mme. de Staél had started for Geneva, when all at once she was said to be in Paris. Napoleon accused Fouché daily of being "wrongly informed," and on the 11th of May he wrote him the following words, which are certainly hard : "If I were to give you the details of all she has done at her country place the two months that she has been there you would be surprised, for although I am five hundred leagues

¹ Welschinger, work quoted, p. 338.

² *Mme. R. et les amis de sa jeunesse*, p. 395.

³ Gautier, work quoted, p. 185.

⁴ Welschinger, work quoted, p. 339 and following.

⁵ *Ibid.*

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away from France I know what is going on there better than the Minister of Police.”¹

What had Mme. de Staél been doing at the Château d’Acosta? She had above everything been very wretched there. “I do not know how it is,” she declared to Bonstetten, “ever since I no longer write to my father I cannot express myself as I want to in my letters. I can still be eloquent in a letter when there is a definite end in view, or when a passionate sentiment inspires me, but it is impossible for me to paint myself to anyone else as to him.”² When writing thus Mme. de Staél was mistaken, for she continued to paint herself for her dear Juliette. She sent numerous letters to this blameless friend,³ letters which, better than any other document, show us the exiled woman with her ceaseless need of movement and action. We will quote some fragments of them :—

“September 20th. ROUEN.

“Here I am at Rouen, dear Juliette, as sad here as everywhere else in exile. But it is nearer to Paris. There is a little coach that comes in 12 hours, starting at 7 in the morning, and the post-chaise in 8 or 9. When will you take advantage of our being nearer, when will you give me a happiness that I can appreciate more than anyone? You say that you will write more often now that you see Pr.[osper] more often. I am afraid, I will own to you, that you will let him fall in love with you, and that would be a mortal sorrow for me, as two of my best affections would thus be disturbed. Do not do this, Juliette. An outlaw as I am, trusting to you, and so prodigiously inferior to you in charms, generosity forbids you to show the least coquetry with him. It is not that I believe much in his affection for me, I am unfortunate enough to doubt it all the time, but to add to this the idea

¹ See the texts taken from the *Correspondance de Napoléon*, Vol. XV, quoted and commented on by Welschinger in the work already mentioned, pp. 171 and 172. See also Lady Blennerhasset, work quoted, III, p. 227 and following.

² Quoted by Lady Blennerhassett, *ibid.*, p. 228.

³ One of these letters has already been published by Mme. Lenormant *Coppet et Weimar*, pp. 76 and 77.

that the unhappiness would come through you would be odious. I do not feel as though I should have the strength to bear it (this is between ourselves). As you are now without adorers in Paris, or rather without the chief ones, why not come here? I am at a hotel in Rouen which is fairly good, there is a pleasant ap[artment] for you. We could talk and go to the theatre, which is a poor one. I should see you anyhow, and that would be so sweet for me. Adieu, dear Juliette, reply at once to this letter in which I have put my whole soul at your mercy.”¹

“ Saturday.

“ I am very sorry, dear Juliette, about the reason which obliges you to stay in Paris and I am wretched at not seeing you. If your invalid is better come for just a day, as you did last time. What I then thought so short is the object of my ambition now. I am going to write to the Min[ister] of Police to ask permission to go and spend 24 h.[ours] with you, but I am very much afraid that he will refuse me. Believe me that I am thinking of you all the time and you can do as you will with me, as with a lover.² Write often.”

“ ACOSTA, Saturday.

“ I have written to you by post, dear Juliette, and I am now giving this letter to Benjamin. Would it not be possible for you to give me a day next week? I have not succeeded in buying this property. I should like to buy another one and persuade myself that I am buying it with you. I have a thousand things to tell you. Give me details about your Mother’s health.”³

“ Tuesday, 6th J[anuary].”

“ Saturday evening,

“ 6th February [1807].

“ Dear Juliette. I have been here nearly three months and I have seen you two days. If I could have foreseen this sorrow I do not know whether I should have settled here.

¹ Unpublished letter, without address. M. Ch. de Loménié’s MSS.

² *Ibid.*

³ Unpublished letter. M. Ch. de Loménié’s MSS. Address : Madame Récamier.

Now that you are, alas, set free in so grievous a way you will hurt me very much if you do not feel the need of coming to spend a few days with me. You have flattered me with your friendship and you have made it necessary to me. It would be cruel to find that there is more pity for my exile in your heart than liking for me. Dear Juliette, come.¹

“ Mathieu says that you are coming on Tuesday: I shall send my carriage to Saint-Germain for you at 1 (o'clock). It will wait there for you until 3. For with you who can hope for anything with certainty? I am sad at not having a word from you since your trouble. I ought not to be too fond of you, as you make me suffer.

“ I propose that you should put a mortgage on what I buy and be co-proprietor. I would guarantee you the net interest at 5 per cent., no loss if sold again but the chance of gain. If this seems reasonable let us do it, so that I may see you more often and more naturally. That is my motive. Adieu, come on Tuesday. I shall sulk with you first and kiss you afterwards. You know very well that your fascination acts on me as though I were a lover.”²

“ Wednesday.

“ Dear friend, I found on arriving here a letter from someone who has chosen precisely Tuesday for coming to see me. I therefore propose to you to come the following Tuesday. Mathieu will come with you then. If, in the meantime, a charitable disposition inclined you to come and stay here, any day would be excellent for that. I also found a letter from Prosper of the 11th of March. Will you send me his letter? You made a brilliant choice yesterday. As a matter of fact they are *all* your friends, when once they have spent an hour with you. As for us, we require more time for such a harvest. Adieu, dear Juliette. Tuesday, the 7th of April. Much love in case I do not see you here in the interval.

“ Tell me something about M. de Pignatelli's health, as I am very much concerned about it. If I were in Paris I would

¹ Unpublished letter without address. M. Ch. de Loménié's MSS.

² Unpublished letter. M. Ch. de Loménié's papers. Address: Madame Récamier, Rue du Mont-Blanc, No. 3, Paris. The post-mark is dated Febr. 16, 1807.

read him *Corinne*. So young and to suffer so much! It makes one feel very sorry, but you are caring for him and I know how you can do that.¹

“Is it not true, dear friend, that I shall see you on Tuesday at the Grand Cerf, at three o’clock at the latest? I fancy Adrien and Mathieu will be with you, but I am longing to see you and talk to you.

“If you do not reply I shall start from here on Tuesday at noon. Was it not well thought out to make a yes of your silence? Thursday.”²

“Tuesday, 27th.

“Dear Juliette. Do write me a word, do give me news of yourself. Just think how cruel my slavery here is. I sincerely hope that you will be able to come here next week. You will find me absolutely alone. What quieter refuge for your sorrow could you find? And yet, does not friendship do some good? I should like, too, to arrange together about some country place for the spring. You would do me a great service by thinking of this. Is it not true that the idea of rendering a service always puts fresh life into one? With fondest love.”³

“Sunday.

“Dear friend, you ought to come to see me *as soon as possible*. Bring anyone you like and start with pleasure, thinking of the pleasure you will give on arriving.⁴ I have an infinite number of things to say to you and I am not going to begin them. I kiss your charming face respectfully. Aubergenville. Sunday.

“My address is Meulan. M. Hochet will tell you the way to this solitary place.”⁵

¹ Unpublished letter in M. Ch. de Loménié’s collection. Address: Madame Récamier, Rue du Mont-Blanc, No. 4, Paris. The post-mark is dated March 26th, 1807. The last phrases of the letter have been put by Mme. Lenormant into another letter from Mme. de Staél. (*Coppet et Weimar*, p. 79).

² Unpublished letter in M. de Loménié’s collection. Address: Madame Récamier, Rue du Mont-Blanc, Paris. The post-mark is dated April 3rd, 1807.

³ Unpublished letter. No address. M. Ch. de Loménié’s MSS.

⁴ This phrase was inserted by Mme. Lenormant in another letter. (*Coppet et Weimar*, p. 77).

⁵ Unpublished letter. No address. M. Ch. de Loménié’s MSS.

"*Monday, 23rd, MEULAN, SEINE-ET-OISE.*

"My son told me, dear friend, that you had planned to come and see me to-morrow at Saint-Germain. I am very glad that you have chosen another day, as I should not be entirely free for you. Will you let me know which day, and I will be there? I wish you had time to come as far as here, but in some way or another I must see you."

"My son went twice to Junot's without finding him. Will you tell him that? With love, dear friend."

"Have you given my letter to M. de Catelan? I doubt it, my dear thoughtless one."¹

Mme. de Staël could only stay a few days in Paris.² Her imprudence in going to see old Mme. de Tessé obliged her to start hastily for Switzerland. From Lyons,³ on the 5th of May, 1807, she wrote to Mme. Récamier as follows: "You have *Corinne* now. Tell me what you hear about it from a literary point of view, and whether, as far as the Government is concerned, you hear no harm, for it is from there that I am awaiting the alleviation of my wretched situation. It seems to me that so innocent an occupation ought to appease, if anything can appease."⁴

It was said that, far from justifying the hopes of Mme. de Staël, Napoleon had a criticism of *Corinne* put in the *Moniteur*. This was an error of Villemain's,⁵ but it is certain that the Emperor, instead of disarming, was still more severe and obstinate with regard to Mme. de Staël.

The loss of her mother, her separation from Mme. de Staël, and the change of habits necessitated by her husband's ruin,

¹ Unpublished letter. Address: Madame Récamier.

² See Lady Blennerhassett, work quoted, III, p. 230.

³ Not from Dijon, as Lady Blennerhassett says. See Eugène Ritter. *Notes sur Mme. de Staël*, p. 94. *Corinne* appeared towards the end of April, 1807. Compare P. Gautier, *Mme. de Staël et Napoléon*, p. 193.

⁴ This letter of the 5th of May has been published almost entirely by Mme. Lenormant (*Coppel et Weimar*, p. 77 and following).

⁵ Reproduced by Lady Blennerhassett and refuted by E. Ritter, *Notes sur Mme. de Staël*, pp. 65 and 66.

caused Mme. Récamier a certain melancholy towards the middle of the year 1807. It was at this juncture, according to Mme. Lenormant,¹ that she became very friendly with the Comtesse de Boigne. Mme. de Boigne, daughter of the Marquis and Marquise d'Osmond, married in England to the General de Boigne, lived in Paris away from her vulgar and brutal husband. She was classed among the group opposed to the Empire. Mme. Récamier became very fond of her. "She liked," says Mme. Lenormant, "that strong and charming mind, that archness full of reason, the perfect distinction of her manners, and even the slight shade of disdain which made her friendliness rather exclusive and her approbation all the more flattering."²

Mme. Lenormant adds that Prosper de Barante was introduced to Mme. Récamier immediately after her great misfortunes. It was Mme. de Staél who, very much interested that year in the young auditor of the Council of State, had sent him to her friend in June, 1806. It seems though³ that, in the first ardour of her passion for M. de Barante, she keenly regretted this confidential impulse. There was the danger that Prosper might fall in love with Mme. Récamier. Juliette, who recognized M. de Barante as *Oswald* (she confided this later to Sainte-Beuve),⁴ was herself sensitive to his seductive qualities. "She liked," says her niece, "to recall that appearance in her society of a man who was to hold an important place in it, and whose friendship was as affectionate as it was lasting."⁵

It was perhaps, too, at this sad time for Mme. Récamier that Eusèbe de Salverte, an agreeable, literary man, who was later on to honour the Liberal party as one of its deputies, sent her the following poem, which Ballanche preserved:⁶

¹ *Souv. et Corr.* I, p. 133 and following.

² Work quoted, p. 134.

³ According to her letters of the 19th of June and the 20th of September, 1806, in M. Ch. de Loménie's collection.

⁴ "Mme. Récamier told me once the elements of *Oswald* and M. de Barante is something in this story." Sainte-Beuve. *Corresp.*, II, p. 253. Letter dated February 4th, 1868.

⁵ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, pp. 135-136.

⁶ Unpublished *Biographie de Mme. R.*, p. 269.

LE LIS.

Le Ciel resplendissait d'une vive lumière ;
 Au dessus des fleurs d'alentour
Le Lis levait sa tête altière
 Et semblait s'embellir de tout l'éclat du jour.
Soudain le Soleil fuit dans un sombre nuage.

Jouet de l'autan déchainé,
Sur sa tige, en tremblant, le Lis s'est incliné.
Le magique reflet de toute la nature
 Ne vient plus l'embellir. . . . La fleur
 A sa pureté pour parure
Et quelques gouttes d'eau brillant sur sa blancheur.

J'accours ; je la revois cette fleur séduisante
 Dont les dieux ont semblé jaloux.
 Aussi noble, encor plus touchante,
Son deuil à sa beauté préte un charme plus doux :
Bientôt un jour serein, effaçant ton outrage,
 Pour toi va renaître, beau lis !
 Mais je n'oublierai pas l'orage ;
Il m'a de tes attraits révélé tout le prix.

CHAPTER VII

THE STAY AT COPPET—AUGUSTUS OF PRUSSIA

1807

Departure for Coppet (July, 1807).—Profound sadness of Mme. Récamier and Mme. de Staél.—Life at the Château of Coppet.—Ballanche's account.—Testimony of Gaudot and of Pictet—Rosalie de Constant's letters.—Influence of the surroundings on Mme. Récamier.—Prince Augustus of Prussia; his passion for Juliette.—The *Athénaïs* of the Comtesse de Genlis.—Letters from Prince Augustus.—Mme. Récamier decides to have a divorce.—Her distress.—Departure from Coppet (November, 1807.)

VERY much upset by her mother's death, Mme. Récamier was ordered by her doctors a change of air. She therefore decided to visit Mme. de Staél again, and it was arranged that at the beginning of July, 1807, she should start for Coppet, under the escort of Elzéar de Sabran. At Moret she had a carriage accident and sprained her ankle. Her friends were most attentive in sending her their sympathy on hearing this bad news. Mathieu de Montmorency begged Mme. Récamier to have a cross put up on the spot where the accident took place,¹ and Lemontey, ever sincerely devoted to her, said: "I hope that this terrible accident will be the last piece of the bad luck which has been pursuing you for two years. It seems to me as though your first life has come to an end and Providence, in preserving your life by a miracle, now gives you a fresh one which will console you for all your past misfortunes."²

On the 10th of July, Mme. Récamier was installed at Coppet, and Mme. de Staél wrote the following letter, a copy

¹ Letter from M. de Montmorency, No. 17. See *Mme. R. et les amis de sa jeunesse*, p. 37 and following.

² *Mme. R. et les amis de sa jeunesse*, p. 35 and following.

of which in Juliette's handwriting exists, to Prince Augustus.¹ "Mme. Récamier wrote to you from Moret, Prince, at the time of her awful fall, and I am sure you will want to know that I went to fetch her from the place where the accident occurred and that I brought her safely here. She is so tired after the journey that she will not write to you by the next post, although she is anxious all the time about your health. Give us some details about it, tell us whether the waters have done you good, and if so come here on your way to Italy. It is the shortest and best route, and you may be quite sure that you will be welcomed here as a friend. I have only had the honour of meeting you once, but I feel as though I know you very well, and I have, and am inspired by others with, the most affectionate interest in you. Be assured of this."

Mme. Récamier had started for Coppet in a state of mind which was somewhat disquieting. However calm and self-possessed she had been, the terrible events which had come upon her had deeply distressed her. She was thirty years of age, and on looking back it perhaps seemed to her as though her life had been a failure. She was, it appears, in that state of sadness, of disenchantment and of weariness, when a woman who has been disappointed in everything can have no hope, except in a great passion, for any consolation and happiness. M. Récamier himself, delicate as his position was with regard to Juliette, had felt this. He endeavoured to intervene and, on the 19th of July, 1807, wrote to Mme. Récamier from Paris, speaking of her sadness.

"Mme. de Staél," he says, "is entirely absorbed in the same sentiment, that is not the way for you to be cured. I am very much distressed about the state of mind you are in, as it must necessarily end in making you ill if you do not use all your efforts to fight against it, to overcome it and to steel your character so that it may get back its energy. It will never be from you that I shall hear what progress you make in this respect, but as, in one way or another I shall always know indirectly about your condition physically and morally, I shall either rejoice or grieve according to what I hear of the situation. I so often say to myself: But what could I have

¹ Unpublished letter among M. Ch. de Loménie's MSS.

done? What kind of life would have been adapted to this interesting friend? I found something very like a reply in one of the chapters of *Corinne*, where it says: "You would, quite unconsciously, hurt me fearfully by trying to judge my character according to those great ordinary divisions for which there are maxims already made; I suffer, I enjoy, I feel in my own way, and it is me that anyone must observe, in order to have any influence over my happiness."¹

What certainly was disquieting, as Récamier wisely fore-saw, was that about the same time Mme. de Staél, in whose society Juliette was to live, was just as distressed and just as sad as she was. We have very exact proof of this. On the 16th of July, 1807, Mme. de Staél wrote as follows to Degérando:—

"I have the conviction that I was born to suffer and I have made quite a religious system for myself about this. I reproach myself with having been frivolous during my prosperity. I blame myself very much, because I believe in divine justice, and for the last four years I have mourned so much that I think I must have deserved it. You reproach me with not having answered you about my religious feelings. I think I shall write when I am quite satisfied with myself. I am at least attending to the education of my children in this respect so scrupulously that I hope to leave behind me worthy descendants of my father."²

What was to be the result of this meeting, in surroundings that were by no means tranquil, of two women, one of whom, in all the splendour of her beauty,³ brought with her a great need of consolation and of affection, whilst the other possessed all the fervour and enthusiasm of intelligence, added to the most passionate sensibility, and lived in a state of exaltation as her natural condition, influencing those around her with the fancies of an imagination which was never at rest? Romances and probably dramas loomed ahead as the outcome of all this.

¹ Unpublished letter. Address: Madame Récamier, Poste restante, Geneva. M. Ch. de Loménié's MSS.

² *Lettres . . .* published by Degérando, p. 72.

³ Guizot saw Mme. Récamier in 1807. See his description in article quoted, p. 531.

Coppet was no longer the calm and peaceful abode which Bayle had formerly found so dull.¹ The Château was, as Mme. de Staél had arranged it, the same or very much the same as it is at present. Mme. de Staél, who for a long time had not liked this abode, had gradually animated the peace which used to reign there. She had put life into everything, a superabundance of life, with excess of work and excess of pleasures. Mme. Récamier established herself in a small spare room, which is still to be seen with its bed and green silk canopy. She met again at Coppet, Schlegel, Constant and Auguste de Staél; Middleton and M. de Sabran were introduced to her. Constant was working at his tragedy of *Wallenstein*. As to Mme. de Staél, she was already busy with her book on Germany but without any fixed plan. What interested her most in this study was to discover "in this apparently heavy country," natures as enthusiastic as her own, dreamy poetry, and a great deal of imagination.²

There is plenty of information about the life that the guests at the Château of Coppet led during the summer and autumn of 1807.

Later on, in 1819, during a grave crisis which marked for Mme. Récamier the commencement of her intercourse with Chateaubriand, we find her affectionate guardian, the philosopher Ballanche, endeavouring to make her recall her memories of Coppet. Ballanche wanted to write a short story on that subject and he begged Mme. Récamier to collaborate with him.

There are a few pages of this work still existing.³ There is a portrait of Napoleon and one of Mme. de Staél, which are both worth keeping.

"Europe was being overrun and meanwhile, in the heart of Europe, on the banks of the Lake of Geneva, was a nook where both the politeness and elegance of old French manners and customs and independence of thought, the generous ideas

¹ See Sainte-Beuve, *Portr. Litt.*, I, p. 371.

² According to her letter to Bérenger, a Lyonese author. See *Revue du Lyonnais*, new series, I, 2, p. 412.

³ Just two pages and a half. Pp. 51, 52, and 53 of the collection of Ballanche's letters, which are in the possession of M. Ch. de Loménie.

of patriotism and liberty had taken refuge. And this nook was a place of exile, upon which the master of the world frequently condescended to look down with his threatening glance. He could count on his armies for pitching a throne into the dust, but he could only count on a general slavishness of thought for strengthening his strange power. Every exaltation of soul scared him as an omen of his fall. Every noble and elevated sentiment, the expression of which he could not immediately stifle, inspired him with a thousand terrors. Whilst his generals were taking cities for him, whilst he himself was staking his immense destiny in great battles, whilst he was walking with pride over entire populations who were decimated before they were subjugated, he did not fear to come down into the arena of the newspapers. The savage Attila wrote cowardly epigrams in the *Moniteur*. He endeavoured to tarnish ideas and sentiments that he could not succeed in reaching in the soul or tearing from the heart. Thus, more than once, he was known to go to the trouble of making parodies for Europe of a few scenes taken from the Château of Coppet. He thought, no doubt, that his bitter and savage irony would win battles for him in the kingdom of the imagination.

“But at the Château of Coppet there were other things than the worship of liberty and independence of thought. Romantic sentiments, poetry, all the arts which appeal to the noble faculties of man had also found shelter there.

“Mme. de Staél had received from Nature immense faculties and that prodigious activity which could make the best of them all. Her great mind took in the whole domain of human intelligence and her ardent soul was such that it extended still further these boundaries. She was endowed with that ascendancy which rallies the ideas of others around its own ideas, and she had, beside this, that great power which stirs tranquil souls, which gives nourishment to restless minds and which displaces the limits of accepted things. She could interest herself, at the same time, in that fermentation of ideas about the Infinite which was working in German minds, and in that something positive which wanted to establish itself in France. She had in her mind the whole future of Europe.

Her ideas were veritable creations ; her reveries even, when applied to literature or politics, were the essayings of a great and powerful imagination. All this was like the investigating genius of a Christopher Columbus throwing out everywhere sounding lines and trying to find the road to another continent. A fresh poetry will no doubt be born from such depths of thought ; the first accents of this poetry were heard by Madame de Staél."

Ballanche's testimony is indirect ; his account is written fantastically, but not without emphasis. We have more precise documents though. An interesting letter has been published,¹ written on the 29th of November, 1807, by M. Pictet, a native of Geneva, to Degérando. It tells us that Mme. Récamier spent about five months at the Château of Coppet and that she contributed "with much grace and devotion, to the amusements of the brilliant society of the Château." Theatricals were the chief entertainment. Mme. de Staél and her children gave a drama that she had written, entitled : *Geneviève de Brabant*. "Conjugal love, maternal love, the frank innocence of childhood were, turn by turn, illustrated on the stage," says the witness, "and I know a certain lady who was in tears from beginning to end." The second piece was by M. de Sabran and was entitled : *Le Grand Monde*. It was a picture, I hope a trifle exaggerated, of the faults, absurdities, and even vices of high society. It was very well written and versified, but there were parts that were too long and exaggerations that spoiled the effect.

Mme. de Staél also entertained at Coppet a very cultivated man named Gaudot² from Neufchâtel. She had great respect for him, and when giving him one day her book or some fragments of *De l'Allemagne*, she said to him : Yours is a mind which is on the frontier of two countries, and your criticism will serve me for two nations."³ Gaudot met, and described in his letters to his sister, the guests at Coppet, Mme. de

¹ *Lettres inédites de Mme. de Staél*, published by Degérando, pp. 73 and 74.

² See, with regard to this, a few pages on Mme. de Staél, by H. F. Amiel, in the *Galerie suisse*, published by Eug. Secretan, II, Lausanne, 1876.

³ Ph. Godet, *Hist. Litt. de la Suisse française*, p. 418.

Stael, Mme. Récamier, Schlegel, M. de Sabran, Constant, Middleton, Auguste de Stael. "It would be difficult to imagine," he says, "the quantity and the delicacy of the small worries which this long stay at the Château have occasioned. Mme. de Stael and Mme. Récamier or Mme. Récamier and Mme. de Stael, as you like, are the two poles around which the movement turns, and both of these two women are in the most extraordinary situation as regards their subsisting relations, their affections and their future. Both of them are within an ace of the road where they will have to make a choice. Although they both laugh a great deal at table and in the drawing-room, they are each very unhappy for different reasons, which they have told me in moments of unconstraint."¹

Gaudot was a shrewd observer. He has left us a portrait of Mme. Récamier.

"She affects without dazzling people," he says, "she attracts and keeps her hold, because she does not talk much and her movements are rare and natural."²

"The play of her eyes is peculiar to her. They are generally lowered and she varies this by turning them away and by looking full at one in an infinitely fascinating way. I even like in her certain defects, such, for instance, as the prettiest little moustache in the world. She is so intelligent and tactful that even women like her. One never hears her taking the lead in conversation, and still less is she ever emphatic, nor does she blame people, but when she talks confidentially, as she has already done with me, she does so with an intimacy which, while it is quite befitting, penetrates one. The first day I only had small talk with her, the second day we spent two hours at the piano, where she sang for me all that I asked her, and on the balcony we first talked about

¹ Ph. Godet, *Hist. Litt. de la Suisse française*, pp. 418 and 419.

² Mme. Récamier's gracefulness left a deep impression on the Genevese dancing masters. In 1820 the famous carbonaro, Andryane, met a "little dancing master" who had had the honour of dancing a gavotte with Juliette before Mme. de Stael. The rival of Vestris, whose name was Morand, nearly lost his head, according to his own confession. "It is for me," he said, "a veritable antidote for the irksome, unsatisfactory lessons I am condemned to give in this country, where the joints of the men and women do not seem to have been made for bending." (*Andryane, Souvenirs de Génève*, I, p. 186.)

music and then about happiness. She has never been happy and does not think she ever will be. What I said to her about that made us quite friends.¹

Constant's *Journal intime* completes this account by giving us a series of impressions about the surroundings amongst which Juliette was now living. At the time of which we write, Constant was only on terms of great courtesy with Mme. Récamier. He did not even flatter himself that he understood her. "She is a strange person," he writes in his diary.² It is from him, nevertheless, that we should ask for a description of life at the Château of Coppet if we had not something better still, an abundant collection of letters, enabling us to evoke with more details those comedies and dramas in which Mme. Récamier was mixed up, those intrigues which were to introduce into her life a crisis from which she had great difficulty to recover. It is in these that we shall find the correct account of those storms which marked the close of the *liaison* between Mme. de Staél and Constant. Nothing could make us comprehend *Adolphe* better, and nothing could explain more thoroughly how it came about that Juliette Récamier, at a critical time in her existence, allowed herself to be drawn into a grave and dangerous adventure.

The letters from Rosalie de Constant to Charles de Constant are the most curious testimony we have with regard to the guests at Coppet during the summer of 1807. Nearly all of them are dated very precisely, which is a valuable help in the history of an epoch in which the time of the events, which take place one after the other, is very difficult to establish exactly.³

On the 7th of July, Rosalie writes to Charles as follows : "Poor Benjamin is very unhappy. He does not know how to shake off a yoke that has become very heavy. He has great need of rest and she does not let him have any. I think he is now at his father's and, in spite of the injustices of which he

¹ Ph. Godet, *Hist. litt. de la Suisse française*, p. 419.

² P. 126.

³ The quotations we are giving are taken from the third packet of the letters from Rosalie de C. to Ch. de C. (1805-1810) in the public library of Geneva, McC, 18. Scarcely anything from these letters has ever been published. Eug. Ritter advises reference to them. *Notes sur Mme. de Staél*, p. 75.

complains, I do not doubt that his first letter will be dated from the Château of Coppet. . . . He has a very weak character, but he has greatly improved morally, for he has returned to all that is good and simple. . . .”

On the 21st of July, Rosalie gives more details :

“The lady of Coppet has made a friendly attack on me by sending me her book and announcing her early visit with Mme. Récamier, who is staying with her. As she complains of her health in her letter, I advised her in my reply absolute tranquillity and Italian indolence during these days of excessive heat. I told her what you said in praise of her book and of the effect it had in London, about which she is very curious. Benjamin is going to Mme. de Nassau’s; he has great need of rest, but I do not know whether his celebrated lady will let him have any. . . .”

On the 7th of August, we have the explicit letter in which Rosalie tells of Mme. de Staél’s violence. Rosalie is very clever in finding the right words. She blames the hostess of Coppet for “that chimerical artificiality in which she delights and with which she surrounds herself.” No better description could be given. As regards Benjamin we have the same formula again :

“For rather a long time now, poor Benjamin has been unhappy in his bonds, and at the end of a friendly conversation he confided to me his troubles, his disgust at his own situation, and the *rôle* he is playing, and his great need of tranquillity and a settled life. You can understand that on seeing him unhappy, wrongly judged and leading a life that his age and health make more difficult every day, I spoke to him as reason, honesty, and true friendship dictated. He encouraged me by telling me that I did him good, that I strengthened his mind, and that if he ever got out of this unhappy state he should owe it to me. He let me see also, that for a long time he has not cared for the lady by any means enough to be willing to marry her, even if she wished it.”¹

As will be seen, it would be impossible to find any testimony about this crisis more precise, more frank, and which reveals

¹ This fragment should be added to the long fragment published by J. H. Menos. *Lettres de B. C. à sa famille*, p. 37.

more. Mme. Recamier has her place in Rosalie's letters. "Mme. de Stael," she writes, "has brought with her Mme. Récamier, in order to make more effect and more stir, and M. de Sabran, a lover who, disdained and vanquished, she now attaches to her chariot, after having done everything possible in order to make a conquest of him." Then comes an account of that violent scene in which Mme. de Stael reproaches Rosalie with her attitude. In this, too, Mlle. de Constant finds a striking phrase in which to express her idea about Corinne. "When she is anywhere, she is so imposing that every one tries to move back and to be silent."¹

Rosalie de Constant certainly did try to withdraw and to break away from a society where she had no rôle to play, since she could not satisfy Mme. de Stael with regard to what interested both of them the most. She continued, nevertheless, to know very well what went on at Coppet. On the 18th of August, she writes as follows : "Mme. de Stael is still in our neighbourhood with her brilliant Court. It is increased now by the arrival of Prince Augustus of Prussia, who is a prisoner in France until there is peace. I have met him a few times, and I spoke to him of Victor. He knows him, and very kindly answered my questions. In consequence of this I was told that I ought to show him some courtesy, and I have invited them all for Thursday. . . . There is nothing interesting about him. He is a flighty sort of man, who has not been made serious by the misfortunes of his country nor the death of his brother. He is very much in love with Mme. Récamier and is very much entertained and enjoying himself in that society. They are going to perform *Andromaque* for us. Mme. de Stael as *Hermione*; *Oreste*, M. de Sabran; *Pyrrhus*, Benjamin; Mme. Récamier, *Andromaque*; *Pylade*, Auguste d'Herm [enches], Arlens' confidant; Constance, a confidant; and Laure, another confidant.² It will be very curious. It is inconceivable that they should show up her situation so openly. Ben[jamin] is very glad to play this part.

¹ See J. Menos, Introd., pp. 37 and 38.

² M. Ad. Gautier has communicated a letter from a young Bernese of Freudeneich about the theatricals at Coppet in 1807. Compare *Mémorial des cinquante premières années de la Soc. d'Hist. de Genève*, by E. Favre, 1889, p. 183.

He is unhappy enough and his situation, with the sort of share that he has given me in it by his own confidence, torments me more than I tell him or let him see. He seems quite decided to make a change. I hope it will be in a way that will leave no regret and no reason for reproach."¹

The long letter that Rosalie wrote to Charles de Constant on Tuesday, the 8th of September, was again full of details about the "terrible woman." After the performance of *Andromaque*, Pyrrhus wanted to break off in a friendly way. This led to that terrifying scene when Mme. de Stael, playing tragedy this time for herself, tried to strangle herself. Here, again, in order to understand to what a pitch passion at Coppet had reached, and consequently to judge of the influence to which Mme. Récamier was submitted there, we must read Rosalie's account. Benjamin gave in and tried to console Mme. de Stael.

"The next day," writes Rosalie, "he got up early, for the horror of his situation had come over him again. He went downstairs, fetched his horse, mounted it and came straight here. We did all we could for him. Mme. de Nassau, who likes him very much, whilst blaming his weakness, united with us in trying to strengthen and console him. When we had decided on a plan together she went away. B[enjamin] was beginning to get more tranquil when we heard cries downstairs. He recognized her voice. My first impulse was to go out of the room and lock it. I went out and found her at full length on the staircase, sweeping the stairs with her hair, and her neck bare. 'Where is he?' she called out to me, 'I must see him again.'"²

After this incident Rosalie wished to keep out of such an affair and never to see Mme. de Stael again.

She continues, nevertheless, to give us more information on the subject. In her letter of the 6th of October, 1807, we find that *Andromaque* was again played at Coppet and that Constant was detestable in the rôle of Pyrrhus. She adds: "He is writing a tragedy which they are to play. As long as he is there I shall not say anything to him, but I am very

¹ See J. H. Menos, *Introd.*, p. 39.

² *Ibid.*, p. 41.

much distressed at the fate to which he is condemned." On the 3rd of November, 1807, speaking of Benjamin, she says : " He is still at Coppet, his mind diverted from all other thoughts by the tragedy he is writing and which will soon be finished. Everyone says that it is very fine. I should distrust the praise and incense that Circe scatters around her to intoxicate those whom she wishes to retain, but Fr. de Chateauvieux, who came to see us, says that it is superb and worthy of Racine. . . ." The letter of the 27th of November contains, as it were, the conclusion of the episode : " I am regretting," Rosalie writes to Charles, " those lost letters of yours, particularly the one in which you go thoroughly into the affair of the bad and too celebrated woman. Although there is some truth in what you say about B., I think you are too severe. We must take into consideration that there is some affection remaining, which does not blind him, though, to the misery and disagreeableness of a situation where there is violence and egoism on one side, weakness and kindness on the other. Anyhow, Heaven bless them ! I have decided to torment myself no more about them. Now that this tragedy has taken possession of him it has stopped all other ideas and all other projects. They go about reading it. They are coming here one of these days ; she is going to Vienna and he to Dôle and Paris."

Constant's *Journal intime* and Rosalie's letters make us understand how, in the midst of this ceaseless agitation and general disorder, Mme. Récamier, meeting a young man who was fascinating and passionate, could for a time come out of her ordinary self, encourage the advances of Augustus of Prussia and think of divorcing and marrying again.

Prince Augustus of Prussia, nephew of Frederick the Great, knew Mme. Récamier before meeting her at Coppet. The letter which Juliette wrote to him on the 10th of July, 1807, dictated by Mme. de Staél, makes us suppose that there was already a certain amount of friendship between them. This friendship soon became love. We have read what the shrewd Rosalie de Constant said about it in her letter to her brother on the 18th of August. Prince Angustus had been taken prisoner on the 6th of October, 1806, at the battle

of Prentzlow,¹ the same one in which his elder brother, Prince Louis² had been killed. He was only twenty-four years of age.³ In spite of what certain biographers tell us, he appears to have been somewhat giddy and thoughtless, and rather elated by his various successes. It was the Vicomte de Reiset, whose *Souvenirs* have been preserved, who had taken Augustus of Prussia prisoner, "and the five hundred foot-soldiers with whom he was retreating."⁴

According to de Reiset's account, the Prince defended himself very courageously. His battalion did not give in until it had been driven back by the French to a bog in which "men and horses began to sink."⁵ Reiset declares that

¹ Not at Saalfeld.

² See *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 138 and following.

³ In a letter dated September 12th, 1810, to Mme. R., he says: "You know that before meeting you I had a *liaison* with a woman who had sacrificed everything to her love to me, and by whom I had two children. Tired of her jealousy I was about to break off with her just as I met you." Unpublished letter in M. Ch. de Loménié's MSS.

⁴ *Souvenirs du Vicomte de Reiset*, p. 226. In a fragment of a letter preserved by Mme. Récamier (No. 86 bis of the letters from Augustus of Prussia) the Prince tells of his capture and of his interview with Napoleon. . . . "I was commanding the rear-guard, although wounded, at Auerstadt. By Prince Murat's attack at Prentzlow I was separated from Prince Hohenlohe's regiment, which was cowardly enough to capitulate while it still could fight. With 240 grenadiers I was attacked by General Beaumont's division, 2,000 dragoons strong, which tried seven times to break through our square, and which obliged us finally, by two batteries of artillery, to retire into a bog, after endeavouring in vain to attack these batteries with the bayonet. I was taken whilst still fighting with seven officers and conveyed to Berlin, where Napoleon was. He received me politely and told me that he did not know why Prussia was at war with him; that he had always wanted peace and a great deal more such talk, which he repeated at Berlin to all the persons who were introduced to him. I was too deeply moved by the misfortunes of my country, by the shameful capitulation of the Prince de Hohenlohe, and by the aspect of Berlin, to be able to answer him with moderation, so I thought it was better to keep silent. After several questions, I said to him: 'The only favour that I ask is that you will not confound me with those who were cowardly enough to capitulate. My brother was more fortunate; he died whilst fighting for his country, and I was only wounded.' The Emperor replied: 'Prince Murat praised your conduct. Stay with your parents and get well, and I will see you again in a few days.' As my father had been commissioned by our King to get better terms of peace than those which Napoleon had dictated, I was deputed to ask for an interview. The unfortunate capitulation of the fortress of Magdeburg, however, caused all negotiations to be broken off, and I was taken to France as a State prisoner." Unpublished letter in M. Ch. de Loménié's MSS. (About Prince Louis Ferdinand and his interesting *liaison* with Pauline Wiesel, see the study by K. Hillebrand, *Revue des Deux Mondes*, May 1st, 1870, p. 96 and following.)

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 225.

his young prisoner was of very noble bearing. "In Prussia," adds the narrator, "he has the reputation of being very gallant, and is called Don Juan. His too pronounced taste for the beautiful sex has drawn upon him several times severe reprimands from the King."¹ And Reiset, taking as his authority the *Mémoires* of the actress, Caroline Bauer, tells us about the Prince's stay at Coppet. He notes the support given by Mme. de Staél to the project of union between Augustus of Prussia and Juliette. He sums up in his own way the letter written by M. Récamier to his wife, to persuade her to give up the idea of a divorce.² He concludes with the following phrase : "Mme. Récamier always said that Prince Augustus was the only man who had been able to make her heart beat for him."

Benjamin Constant, it appears, helped forward as much as he could the designs of Prince Augustus. In his *Journal intime* he criticizes him favourably. "Prince Augustus of Prussia," he says, "is here for Mme. Récamier. . . . He is a distinguished man. How much better the Germans are than we are!"³ The Prince was hasty and had brusque manners. "One day that he wanted to say something to Mme. Récamier when they were out riding, he turned to Benjamin Constant who was with them and said : 'Monsieur de Constant, suppose you were to have a little gallop ?' And the latter laughs at the German subtlety."⁴ The question is, how did Prince Augustus set about persuading Juliette into the idea of a divorce after which he was to marry her? It is not very difficult to imagine. He had to do with an unhappy woman on the decline of her first youth, a woman whose whole life since her marriage had been, as it were, out of tune and who had a right still, perhaps, to hope for happiness in a veritable and sincere union. It was, we believe, with all her soul that Juliette Récamier wished for this union. Nature had never appealed to her more forcibly than at this moment.

In 1832, when the Comtesse de Genlis published her story, *Athénaïs ou le Château de Coppet en 1807*, she claimed to have

¹ *Souvenirs du Vicomte de Reiset*, p. 226.

² Rather curious, p. 228.

³ P. 123.

⁴ Sainte-Beuve, *Causées du Lundi*, I, p. 131.

kept strictly to history although she had changed the dates, and she declared that she had represented the heroine of this romance such as she had seen her.¹ We should like to be able to believe her, at least once, and to follow her in this reconstitution in which many useless details are mixed with information which appears to be fairly exact. But the whole story is full of mistakes.² And in no other work do the inconveniences of this hybrid style to which Mme. de Genlis was so addicted appear so palpably. The story becomes ridiculous, the inventions of the writer puerile. It is well known, for instance, that the strange poet, Zacharie Werner, was married three times. He first married a notorious woman, his next wife was a judge's daughter who had lived with numerous lovers, and he had thirdly invited to his hearth the heiress of a Polish tailor. Mme. de Genlis finds nothing better to invent than to imagine Werner in love a fourth time, and this time with Mme. Récamier.³ It was not very flattering to her heroine.

The entire story is written in this way. The supposed epigrams by Schlegel⁴ are very foolish. There is no analysis, nothing by which to distinguish a character or to state clearly a situation.

The portrait of Athénaïs is insignificant.⁵ The Prince's account is a wretched platitude in spite of his pretensions to eloquence. Although Mme. de Genlis insists several times on the correctness of her narration, particularly when she describes the boating on the lake and that storm when "Frédéric carries Athénaïs, who is unconscious, to shore,"⁶ no confidence can be placed in the story. The bad methods of it as a novel, the commonplace style of expression, like the arbitrariness of the composition, spoil a charming subject. The Prince tries in vain to win Athénaïs, and then becomes resigned to his fate. The farewell scene is the invention of Mme. de Genlis. Nothing is wanting, neither the stone bench,⁷ nor the old hermitage,⁸ "the humble refuge of grief,"

¹ Author's note.

² Mme. Récamier is represented as being banished.

³ P. 18.

⁴ P. 35.

⁵ P. 42.

⁶ P. 105.

⁷ P. 135.

⁸ P. 133.

nor the bunch of flowers carried off by the unhappy lover.¹ Frédéric is recalled by a letter from Berlin,² and he starts with despair in his heart at the very moment “when midnight strikes by the *château* clock.”³

The novel, as so frequently happens, is much less interesting than truth itself. In this case, what gives us the impression of reality, as we have not any letters from Juliette herself, are those from Prince Augustus, some fragments of which have already been published by Mme. Lenormant. Before leaving Coppet he signed and gave to Mme. Récamier the following declaration: “I swear by my honour and by my love to keep in all its purity the sentiment which attaches me to Juliette Récamier, to take all the steps necessary for uniting myself with her in the bonds of marriage, and to possess no other woman as long as I have a hope of uniting my destiny with hers.

“AUGUSTUS, Prince of Prussia.

“COPPET, October 28th, 1807.”⁴

Before leaving, the Prince gave Mme. Récamier a gold bracelet and a chain with a ruby heart.⁵ The day after his departure he wrote to her from Lausanne at half-past six in the morning.⁶

“I eagerly take advantage, my dear Juliette, of the time while the horses are being changed to tell you again of the intense grief that our separation causes me. After a lucky chance had given me the happiness of spending nearly three months in your company, a cruel obligation compels me to leave you. One has only to see you in order to love you, but one must have had the opportunity of knowing the sweetness and nobility of your character, your winning modesty, the inexpressible charm of yourself and of your ways in order to feel the passionate affection with which you have

¹ P. 141.

² P. 154.

³ P. 157. Rondelet's account, too, cannot be relied upon, *Éloge de Mme. R.*, p. 114 and following. ⁴ M. de Loménie's MSS.

⁵ These souvenirs belong at present to Mme. Itier, Château de Veras, Veynes, Hautes-Alpes.

⁶ Letter No. I, in M. Ch. de Loménie's collection. Every letter from the Prince is numbered by him. The fragments we give have not been published before.

inspired me. You alone, my dear Juliette, have made me know what true love is, the love which excludes every other sentiment and ignores the limits of time. The vow which you made me,¹ but still more the entire confidence that I have in your sentiments and in your character, ought to reassure me if it were possible for me to be tranquil when away from you. I fear more especially that, surrounded by homage, taken up with the amusements of Paris, influenced by the counsel of those whose interests are opposed to mine, absence may weaken the feelings you have for me. Among the persons who will pay court to you there will certainly be some who have more brilliant and agreeable qualities.

"The only advantage that I shall have over them will be to love you much more. Rest assured, my dear Juliette, that without you no more happiness exists for me and that it depends on you to make me the happiest or the most miserable of men. P.S.—I am going to remind you of the promise you made me not to show my letters to anyone, and I beg you to present to Mme. de Staél the homage of my affectionate and respectful attachment. Adieu."

The tone of this letter is truly touching; it shows us a sincere passion, and it proves to us that Mme. Récamier, on her side, had made the most definite promises. She, too, was bound by a vow, and she had declared her sentiments to Prince Augustus. When he left her she was undoubtedly resolved to get back her liberty by a divorce and to marry this young man, who was two years younger than herself, and whose passion was perhaps destined to change his whole life. On the sixth of November, 1807, he sent her his sixth letter:²

¹ We give the text of this vow according to the copy which Prince Augustus sent to Mme. de Staél: "I swear by my soul's salvation to keep in all its purity the sentiment which attaches me to Prince Augustus of Prussia; to do all which honour permits to break off my marriage; to have neither love nor coquetry for any other man; to see him again as soon as possible; and, whatever the future may be, to trust my destiny to his honour and to his love.—J. R., Coppet, October 28th, 1807." Unpublished MSS. of M. Ch. de Loménie.

² The second letter is dated from Berne, October 30th. "You have become for me," he tells her, "an object of worship with which religious ideas are united, for are not beauty and goodness the finest image of God on earth?" The third letter is from Schaffhouse, dated the 31st October. In the fourth letter from Riedlingen, dated by mistake October 2nd (read

"I am writing to you, my dear Juliette, from a little town two days' journey from where I am going. I felt the most painful sensation when passing through the place where I lost a brother whom I loved dearly. As his body was embalmed I had hoped that it would be fairly well preserved, but unfortunately he is no longer recognizable. I have heard some more details about his heroic death which makes his loss still more regrettable. It was only by thinking of you, dear love, that the bitterness with which these sad thoughts inspired me was sweetened. The pleasure I shall have in seeing once more my parents, my children, and my friends will be mingled with very disagreeable memories. The hope of being able to be useful again to my country will help me to endure these. It is very late, and they are waiting for my letter at the post. Adieu. Keep your affection for me, as on that all my happiness depends, and let me have news of you often."

Mme. Récamier answered the Prince's letters. She reassured him, but at the same time she endeavoured to communicate to him her scruples with regard to M. Récamier, who, in spite of his misfortunes, continued to lead a festive life. On the 14th of November, the Prince wrote as follows:¹

"I received, dear Juliette, with unspeakable joy your charming letter of the 29th of Oct[ober]. It calmed the anxiety I was feeling at not having had news from you, and it has reassured me very much about the dangers of absence. I do not distrust your promises, I only fear the obstacles which do not depend on us. It is impossible to give you an idea of the joy of my parents and friends on my return to my country. The former feared that they would never see me again, the latter hoped a great deal from my return. Unfortunately, we do not yet see the end of our woes, and increasing claims

November 2nd) he writes as follows: "I read *Malvina* with great pleasure. There are only a few improbable things which I did not like in this novel. What struck me the most, because it seems to me now inconceivable, was that Seymour should be unfaithful, although he really loved." The fifth letter was from Erlangen, written on the 4th of November (and not October, as is written by mistake). Unpublished documents in M. Ch. de Loménie's collection.

¹ Letter No. 7.

make me fear even for our existence. I have announced my arrival to my cousins, and shall await here their reply. Your tender fears for M. R. amused me very much, and their result gives me great hope for the future. How fortunate it is for me that he does not know how to appreciate you better, and to take advantage of the happiness he might enjoy. If you were necessary to his happiness how could he enjoy himself during your absence? I beseech you, dear Juliette, to be fully persuaded that I can never again be happy without you, and that I am waiting with the keenest impatience the happy moment when I shall be able to see you again. Do not forget the portrait you promised me. I have already given orders that someone shall be found who can paint mine. Adieu, dear Juliette, let me have news of you often, as it is the only pleasure I can enjoy when I am away from you."

Gradually Juliette, who was no doubt greatly embarrassed, wrote less often. Prince Augustus was most anxious about her silence. He feared a thousand obstacles, and his affection increased day by day. (Letter No. 8, November 17th). Juliette pointed out to him the duties he had to his family and his country, but he flattered himself with the idea that he should fill his part much better when encouraged by the "example" and the "approval" of his beloved. "To sacrifice a man who adores you, who wants to devote all his life to you and who has already given you the greatest proofs of his love, to the idea of perhaps causing a few disagreeable moments to a person who does not love you, to whom you are only bound just as long as you wish to be, and who has already made you lose twelve of the most beautiful years of life, would be," he writes, "a cruelty of which I cannot believe you capable." (Letter No. 9, November 21st).¹ Juliette had then realized with terror, as we may imagine, the imprudence and the difficulty of a situation of which she had at first only seen the charm. She had pledged herself, and her courage failed her already to break off with M. Récamier. She became sad and not well; she was inclined to fall into that

¹ "I beg you," he says in his letter of the 24th November, "to remember often not to flirt."

state of languor again in which Prince Augustus had already seen her. She was in no hurry to return to Paris and, in order to delay her departure, she made an excuse of her friendship for Mme. de Staél and her wish to be agreeable to her.¹ Juliette had promised to go to the Rhine to see Prince Augustus, but she now refused to do so. (Letter No. 13, December 9th).² "You refuse," he writes, "in spite of my earnest entreaties, to undertake this journey, to come a distance of four hundred leagues and to give up the most brilliant entertainments and the most interesting society that has existed in Europe in order that we may see each other again for a few days. In spite of this you do not speak to me in your letters of the incertitude that the future seems to have for you. Nevertheless, all these proofs of your indifference for me have not destroyed a friendship which, unfortunately for me, has taken too deep a root in my heart. My reason fights in vain against a sentiment which only offers me very uncertain hopes for the future. It is cruel to remind me of past happiness and to paint the future in such seductive colours if you will never realize these hopes."

Juliette Récamier spent the last weeks of her stay at Coppet in the most intense distress of mind. The faithful Camille Jordan must have been informed of the danger his friend was in, when he wrote to her, on the 7th of September of that year, the letter in which he blames her for her "rather doubtful *liaisons*."³ Mme. de Staél must have calmed his fears, as a little later, in a letter dated the 5th of October, he said to her with reference to Mme. Récamier: "I have noticed with joy how much your mutual friendship has strengthened and gained in nobility; how much more serious her mind has become, more religious, more loving, and I do not know what touching charm it is that seems to be added to all her former charms."⁴ Jordan either made a mistake himself or was led into making the mistake. He had, besides, just had a son, and was given up to domestic joys. Mathieu de Montmorency was no better informed. The following letter which he wrote to Jordan will show us what,

¹ According to letter No. 11, from Prince Augustus.

² *Mme. R. et les amis de sa jeunesse*, p. 42.

³ From Vienna.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

in Juliette's absence, had become of the little group of friends :

“ MONTMIRAIL, 14th December, 1807.

“ It is not worth while, dear Camille, to go into the causes of a long silence about which our hearts (between you and me) protest in all sincerity. I cannot really conceive what has prevented my writing in answer to a letter on *Corinne*, which is one of the wittiest I have ever received, and which gave me special pleasure on account of its sympathetic agreement on several points, and also on account of your distinguished way of judging the talent of our friend. I kept that agreeable letter and have read it over again more than once. There is quite another subject to write about though, namely, the sincere joy that Pylade gave me by informing me of the birth of your son, and the desire I have to embrace you heartily, to express to you my sincere compliments, and to thank God with all your family. You are losing no time and are arranging for yourself the nicest little circle in the world for your noble and dignified retreat. I shall have the most charming acquaintances to make there on my next journey south, but what about you, shall you not take a journey first in this direction? Have you not done enough in the matter of the law-suit and all your affairs? Have we not also for us the chance of the Court of Appeal? Pylade has perhaps told you that for more than a month I have been with my daughter and in the bosom of the virtuous family which you were able to appreciate. I am persuading myself that the weather is still beautiful for the country, but nevertheless, am going next week to prepare to receive you in Paris. We shall certainly be there for the 20th. The Augustins must be arriving then. The beautiful friend will perhaps have been . . . on the way through Lyons. She will have given you news of the one who is going to bury herself in Germany.¹ Sad and continual separation! Have we not to talk about her and about a great many other things? Do come then and acknowledge that I am a generous friend to express all my

¹ Mme. de Staél returned to Germany at the close of 1807. Albert Sorel, *Mme. de Staél*, p. 132.

affection without any anger, before complaining that you did not send me a few lines about this last event which is so interesting to your friends. I must confess that I have been expecting to hear from you by the last few posts, but I did not want an over-touchiness to prevent my telling you how glad I am and that I congratulate you heartily. I have to be a little brief on account of an opportunity that I do not wish to miss. Adieu, come and be here for Pylade's move, which will certainly leave him more time for his friends and to rest. You are missing a fine opportunity for interesting observations of certain characters. They will not be all lost. Respectful compliments to your wife. Remember me to your family and to that good Coste. All kind messages again, and I begin to think that my son-in-law is not behaving as well as you."¹

Juliette had no other resources for guiding her through the difficulties in which she was involved than her own sober-mindedness, which had returned to her, and Mme. de Staél's counsels. Now, although Mme. de Staél's opinions were most valuable in literature, her moral guidance, we must say, was not a very safe one to follow. Juliette was reduced to taking herself to task. Big, worthy Baron de Vogt,² whom she had only known a short time and who was useful to her later on, was not intimate enough with her then to be able to render her any service.

On the 6th of November, 1807, Benjamin Constant wrote to his aunt : "I have been in such a suffering state, morally and physically, that I have let some time elapse without writing to you. There are times when one has not the strength to do even what gives one pleasure. My tragedy has suffered by my state as much as my correspondence, and I am scarcely any farther with it than when I last wrote. I set to work with it, though, once more yesterday, and I am going to make myself continue if I can, because I should like to have finished it before leaving here, and I have only a

¹ Not signed. Address : Monsieur Camille Jordan. Bonbée collection, *Recueil politique*, No. 34.

² *Mme. R. et les amis de sa jeunesse*, p. 58.

fortnight more now. All the departures are fixed for after the performance of M. de Sabran's comedy, which is to take place at the end of next week. . . . Adieu, my dear aunt, I assure you that you are very dear to me and your friendship is still what is of the most interest to me in life.”¹ The Coppet guests were to leave the Château towards the middle of November.

¹ Unpublished letter. Public Library of Geneva, Mcc, 36. The letter dated by Menos, November 26th, p. 232, is dated the 16th in the MSS.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CRISIS

(1808—1809).

Mme. de Staél starts for Germany a second time.—Her letters to Mme. Récamier.—Corinne at Vienna.—Benjamin Constant's *Wallenstein*.—Fresh letters from Prince Augustus to Mme. Récamier.—Juliette's scruples.—The grief of Prince Augustus.—Mme. Récamier thinks of suicide.—More letters from Mme. de Staél ; she returns to Coppet.—Fresh storms ; Baron de Vogt's judgment.—The rupture between Mme. de Staél and Benjamin Constant.—Prosper de Barante ; his letters.—Mme. de Staél's jealousy.—She goes to Lyons (June, 1809) and meets Juliette again.—Mme. Récamier at Coppet (summer of 1809).

THE Château of Coppet was empty and the commotion had calmed down. Mme. de Staél planned to return to Germany and take up again the work which her father's death had interrupted.¹ On the 3rd of December, 1807, she informed the Prefect of Leman by letter that she was going to spend the winter in the South of Germany, in order to place her younger son at school there. M. de Champagny had already informed her that the Emperor would accord her in a foreign country the protection of the French envoys. It therefore seemed as though the Government were slightly relaxing its severity, and on the other side she herself was giving way, by sending word about her moves, in order to avoid as much as possible the persecutions from which she had suffered so much.²

Mme. de Staél left Benjamin and took with her Schlegel. Constant had at last finished his *Wallenstein*. He was

¹ Lady Blennerhassett, Vol. III, p. 245. Paul Gautier, *Mme. de Staél et Napoléon*, p. 215.

² Welschinger, *La censure sous le premier Empire*, pp. 341-342.

letting it lie by for a time in order to correct it later. He declared that he was resolved to acquire the reason which had failed him for the conduct of his life, and he owned that the weakness of his character had led to the most serious results for him. "I have, perhaps, done as much harm," he said, "during my life as a bad man, but it has always been through the fear of doing harm."¹ It is no doubt charitable to heal the wounds one has caused, but it is more delicate still to avoid causing them. Benjamin saw this. His father, too, was ill and wanted to see him. Before returning to Paris, Constant went in search of a little peace to Dôle. This was only a relative calm, but he was accustomed to live in fear of storms. "I have learnt," he writes, "to sleep in a barque lashed by waves, and sea-sickness has become so usual a sensation to me that it does not prevent me from thinking of other things."²

In her letters to Mme. Récamier, just as she was leaving, Mme. de Staél recommended to her kindness the friend from whom she was separating with such intense sorrow. She also expressed her own grief and anguish. "After five months so sweet as these have been, it seems as though one could scarcely be unhappy again, as though some warmth must remain just as with people who travel in warm countries, but by degrees this warmth will go away and absence get the better of me."³ After the departure of Mme. Récamier, Mme. de Staél, in spite of her own suffering, had to console Middleton, who "sobbed with grief." She had read Benjamin's tragedy to Rolle before M. de Noailles and Comte Golowkin, and she asked Juliette to invite a little group of the élite of Paris to hear their friend's master-piece. They were to meet again the following summer, and until then it was agreed that Mme. de Staél should write two letters for each one of Juliette's.⁴

¹ Letter to Mlle. Rosalie de Constant (*Lettres de B.C. à sa famille*. p. 235.

² J. H. Menos, *Lettres de B.C. à sa famille*, p. 238.

³ Unpublished letter according to a copy belonging to M. Ch. de Loménie. It is dated from Lausanne, December 2nd (1807). The original has been lost. Another letter of the third of December has been quoted by Ballanche. Unpublished *Biographie de Mme. R.*, p. 47.

⁴ According to the same letter.

Mme. de Staël kept her word and, during this second visit to Germany, she sent Mme. Récamier those letters which Chateaubriand had read when he wrote as follows in his *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe*: "There is nothing in the printed works of Mme. de Staël which approaches this naturalness, this eloquence in which imagination lends expression to sentiments. There must have been great virtue in Mme. Récamier's friendship, since it made a woman of genius bring forth what was concealed and had not hitherto been revealed in her talent. One divines also in Mme. de Staël's sad accent a secret sorrow, about which the beauty was of course the confidant, she who could never have similar wounds."¹

We have read these long letters, which Mme. Récamier towards the close of her life showed to Daniel Stern.² Brifaut was mistaken in thinking they had been destroyed. Sainte-Beuve, who had also seen them, declared that Mme. Récamier had never intended to "destroy" nor to "suppress" them, and he regretted their absence in the first two volumes published by Mme. Lenormant.³ Since then some portions of them have been published in *Coppet et Weimar*. The consideration of Mme. Récamier's heirs for the wishes expressed by the Duchesse Victor de Broglie has hitherto prevented an integral publication of them. The day when this can take place Chateaubriand's opinion will be justified, and this will be the most important document as regards the history of Mme. de Staël between the publication of *Corinne* and that of *L'Allemagne*. It is a document that will be all the more valuable from the fact that, in the *Dix Années d'exil*, the narration stops abruptly in 1804 only to be continued in 1810, and that in the part where it begins again it must have been altered by what her son, M. de Staël, had the calm audacity to term "slight corrections of style."⁴

According to Mme. de Staël's heirs, the year that she passed in Vienna, in that city where some of those who were being pursued by Napoleon took refuge, was "the calmest year

¹ *M.O.T.* IV, p. 415. Ballanche praises these letters in his *Biographie de Mme. Staël*, p. 46.

² Daniel Stern. *Mes Souvenirs* (1806-1833), p. 359.

³ *Causeries du Lundi*, XIV, p. 305.

⁴ See in the édition Charpentier, pp. 198 and 200.

she had had since her exile.”¹ She had too vivid an imagination though, and too warm a heart, for this quietude ever to have been very thorough. She was aware of this herself, and it was Mme. Récamier whom she counted upon for explaining to posterity this striking feature of her character. “I am,” she wrote to her a little later from Geneva, “a person with whom and without whom one cannot live, and it is not that I am either despotic or bitter, but I seem to everyone something strange, at the same time better and worse than the usual run. Anyhow, as you are much younger than I am, and as your intelligence comprehends everything, when I am dead you can tell all that with a kindly feeling which will explain it.”²

The traveller went first to Munich. She wanted to visit Bavaria which, under Prince Maximilien de Deux-Ponts and the minister Montgelas, had just been undergoing a reform in the sense of modern tendencies. Schelling and Jacobi were teaching there at the Academy. Mme. de Staél arrived at Munich on the 14th of December, 1807. She stayed there five days, guided by Jacobi with regard to her visits and any steps she took.³ Just before leaving she summed up her impressions for Mme. Récamier.

“MUNICH December 20th [1807].”

“Dear Juliette, I was getting distressed at having no news from you. It seems to me that your sentiments for me have the effect on me of a fine day, although they begin again I am always afraid of them coming to an end. I have spent five days here and am leaving for Vienna in an hour. Thirty leagues farther on away from you and away from all that is dear to me. The Court from here is in Italy, but I was received in a charming way; my beautiful friend was spoken of by everyone with admiration. You have an aërial reputa-

¹ Statement by Mme. de Staél’s son in *Dix Années d’exil*, p. 296.

² Fragment of an unpublished letter, the copy of which is numbered 138 in M. Ch. de Loménié’s MSS.

³ See Lady Blessinghassett, III, p. 246 and following. Paul Gautier quotes and discusses (*Mme. de Staél et Napoléon*, p. 216) a note in the *Journal de L’Empire*, according to which Mme. Récamier was to travel with Mme. de Staél.

tion that nothing vulgar can reach. The bracelet you gave me caused me to have my hand kissed rather more often than usual and I send to you all the homage it obtained.

"I do not care for Munich at all. It is like us, petrified, and we have much more grace in the same situation. I have just written to Prince Augustus. I have told him that I shall be at Coppet at the beginning of June. Do not refuse, dear, to give me another summer of happiness. As soon as I am in Vienna I shall write to you. Adieu, alas, adieu!"

An account of Mme. de Staél's stay in Vienna has been written,² and we have not to re-write the history of it for its own sake. Necker's daughter could only praise the behaviour of the Emperor Francis and of the French Ambassador Andréossy as far as she was concerned. The society of this city was neither very intelligent nor very cultured, but it was, as it still is, agreeable and gay. Mme. de Staél also met there the Field-Marshal Prince de Ligne, a diffuse and incorrect writer, but a gay, indulgent moralist, whose *Lettres et Pensées* she published in 1809. The Prince was then over seventy-two years of age. It was during this visit that Guillaume Schlegel gave his lecture to an *élite* assembly on Dramatic Art and Literature.

Mme. de Staél's letters to Mme. Récamier give us all the details of this episode, which was so important for the critical history of the book on Germany. An article appeared in a *Gazette* on the 14th of December, 1807, such as the two friends had foreseen.

Mme. de Staél congratulated herself on being the only one mentioned in this "villainous" article. She adds: "Here am I in this city and I have been received here in the most delightful manner. The mother of the Empress, a very intellectual woman, has overwhelmed me with favours which,

¹ The original of this letter is lost. The copy is among M. Ch. de Loménie's MSS. Part of it has been published in *Coppet et Weimar*, pp. 112-113. It was copied by Ballanche with the exception of the same omission in his unpublished *Biographie de Mme. R.*, pp. 47 and 48.

² Lady Blennerhassett, III, p. 250 and following. P. Gautier, work quoted, p. 216 and following.

it is true, were due to my father, but for that very reason they are all the more mine. The marriage¹ will lead to many festivities and life of that kind is, as you know, very tiring. I shall get away from it very soon. There will be nothing, I fear, that I shall like as far as real friendship is concerned. Prince de Ligne, about whom we have talked so much, is really specially kind and good. He has M. de Narbonne's manners, but with a heart. It is a pity he is old, but I have an invincible weakness for that generation.² I have already had Comte O'Donnel's declaration; he is kind, sensible, but without any charm. Can it be that we are the only two women who are both kind and fairly agreeable?"³

All the stir of Vienna did not penetrate into the mind or heart of Mme. de Staél. "It is," she writes, "a kind of opium which I take by looking on and listening, and it tires me almost as much as the other opium." Like Juliette herself, Mme. de Staél was sad, and in this city of Vienna, where all that she saw appeared to her to have no relation to her past, in spite of all the kind attentions of which she was the object, her thoughts returned to Benjamin Constant. "I wish," she wrote to Mme. Récamier, "that you would encourage Benj. to have his piece, *Valstein*, printed; it must be judged by Europe before it is played. Talma will criticize it in one way, another in some other way, and the piece itself will disappear. A preface by him at the commencement will fix people's opinions, and if there are any changes to be made after it is printed, this can be done just as well for the theatre as from the manuscript. Do, my dear friend, encourage him in this way. He has such great literary talent and his imagination is opposed to his happiness in this as in all other things. He cannot, with his disposition, dispute with those in authority, with comedians, etc. To have the things printed and then let things go their own way is, I think, the best way

¹ The marriage of the Emperor Francis with his third wife Marie Louise d'Autriche-Este (see Lady Blennerhassett, III, p. 251).

² Ballanche in his *Biographie de Mme. R.*, quotes a very charming letter from the Prince de Ligne to Mme. R., pp. 70, 71, and 72.

³ Our text agrees with the copy which belongs to M. de Loménié (see *Coppet et Weimar*, pp. 113 and 114). Copied by Ballanche in his unpublished *Biographie de Mme. R.*, pp. 48 and 49.

for everyone, but particularly for him.¹ Benjamin had been living in Paris since the 9th or 10th of February. He found, he said, "amongst his friends much kindness and a great deal of curiosity among other people."² He intended giving some readings of his piece as soon as his domestic, who also copied his manuscripts, could set to work on it.³ Auguste de Staél was also in Paris, where he often met Mme. Récamier.

But Juliette was herself struggling with a difficult situation and was little able to render, with a free mind, the services which were expected from her. Her position with regard to Prince Augustus had become quite grave. On the 25th of December, 1807, the Prince had written her the following letter⁴ : "I read your letter No. 9 with a mixture of pleasure and pain which I cannot describe to you. You give me fresh proofs of the sentiments to which I attach all my happiness, and you take away from me nearly all hope of seeing our projects succeed. In your letter, you say yourself, my dear Juliette, that *you are bound by conventions which are like duties* and you do not hesitate about sacrificing my happiness to such considerations? If you persist in your resolution what opinion can I have of your conduct? Would it not seem as though you are making a cruel game of what to me is more than existence. No, such refinement of cruelty is not in your character, or else you must have lost that charming kindness which made you sympathize with the misfortunes of others and rendered ineffable the impression that your beauty, your grace, and your intelligence made upon me."⁵

Even at that time, the 25th of December, a shrewd observer might have foreseen the drama which was to ensue. Juliette had pledged herself by the salvation of her soul,⁶ but it did not depend upon her alone to break certain bonds. M. Récamier certainly appears to have consented twice

¹ All which precedes is from an unpublished letter of Mme. de Staél's, dated from Vienna, February 28th. M. Ch. de Loménie's MSS. A great part of this letter is copied in Ballanche's unpublished *Biographie de Mme. de Staél*, pp. 49, 50 and 51.

² J. H. Menos, *Lettres de B.C. à sa famille*, pp. 238 and 239.

³ According to the letter from Mme. de Staél quoted above.

⁴ No. 16 of M. Ch. de Loménie's collection.

⁵ In this same letter Prince Augustus reminds Juliette that M. Récamier had "twice" proposed to her a rupture. He begs her not to let herself be intimidated by a first refusal. ⁶ Letter No. 16.

to a rupture,¹ but he now hesitated. His affection for his wife, which was very sincere, rebelled against the idea of a separation and Juliette, when once away from that Coppet, where sentiments were exaggerated beyond all measure, did not dare to stand firmly by what had been a moment's wish.

Mme. Lenormant has given us, with regard to this crisis, an explanation which we must take thoroughly into account.² According to her, Mme. Récamier had in the first place accepted the proposal of marriage, as her union with her husband was "one of those which the Catholic religion itself proclaims null." She had written to M. Récamier asking him for a rupture and he had not refused, but had reminded his companion of all the mutual ties which had united them for the last fourteen years. "He even expressed," says Mme. Lenormant, "the regret that he had respected certain susceptibilities and repugnances, as otherwise a closer bond would not have allowed of this idea of separation." These two words, *susceptibilities* and *repugnances*, should be noted and considered. If M. Récamier really used them,³ they must have evoked in Juliette's mind the memory of delicate circumstances when the companion of her life made concessions to her which now called for some consideration. M. Récamier was at present old and almost poor, so that one feels what must have been passing in Mme. Récamier's kind and tender heart. Once more she resigned herself to her lot. Undoubtedly it would have been better for her to have brusquely announced to the Prince the result of the self-examination that she had only been able to make calmly in Paris, but women rarely act in this way. The Prince, liberated by the peace, had returned to Berlin and was once more with the King of Prussia. Juliette wanted to bring about a transition and gradually extinguish this great flame. This can be felt, not in Juliette's own letters, which are not

¹ See Letter No. 16. ² *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 141 and following.

³ Does the following passage, taken from one of the Abbé Morellet's letters, refer to M. and Mme. Récamier (see his unpublished *Mémoirs*, II, p. 260, edition of 1822)? "We have here a tragedy of another kind. It is a complete disagreement, though not yet followed by a separation, between M. and Mme. de R. The quarrel is quite public, etc." The letter is dated April 7th, 1808.

forthcoming, but in the interesting letters from the Prince, letters which are strange too, and in which expressions of ardent passion are mingled with reticences and changes commanded by political prudence. Under the signature of Prince Augustus, the King of Prussia becomes : *my relative* or *my cousin*; Queen Louise is *my cousin's wife*; the Prussian Government, *our business-house*.¹ At the end of the year 1807, Prince Augustus was arranging how, in case M. Récamier persisted in his attitude, he could see the woman he loved so desperately. "If, contrary to our expectations," he writes in his letter of December 29th,² "he should not accept the proposals that you are making to him, I think, in order to meet, we must choose some other place than the one where I had the happiness of making your acquaintance."³ He proposes Frankfort-on-Main, or some other such town not far from the French frontier. By the beginning of the month of January, 1808, Juliette had destroyed the hopes of her *fiancé* of a day. She told him that between happiness and herself the barrier "was placed for ever."⁴ She could not break the bonds, though, that caused her unhappiness. "If you were sacrificing me to real duties," answered Prince Augustus, "I should myself admire what would cause the torture of my life. But to sacrifice the happiness of a man who loves you to distraction, and to whom you did not appear to be indifferent, to the caprices and prejudices of conventionalities, that would seem as though strength of mind were wanting." As we see, Juliette was expiating cruelly those boating excursions on the Lake of Geneva, when she took God and Nature as witnessess of her vow. No doubt she had promised too thoughtlessly to belong always to the Prince, whatever the future might be,⁵ but how could she have thought that M. Récamier, who had appeared to consent in principle to a divorce, would now consider it so painful?

We are therefore touched by the grief of this sincere lover,

¹ See *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 144.

² No. 17

³ Unpublished letter among M. Ch. de Loménié's MSS.

⁴ "I know, though, from M. R.'s letters and from your own confessions," declares Prince Augustus, "that it only depends on you to break the bonds which cause your unhappiness." (Letter No. 18).

⁵ See the Prince's letter, No. 18. It is dated January 7th.

but we shall see him, too, in a certain sense fail to keep his word. "I will not harass you any more with my letters," he writes,¹ "and this one is the last you will receive from me." Five days later, he writes again to Juliette, and there are more than a hundred letters from him after this promise. He feels how deep Juliette's grief is when she tells him that "happiness is far from her," that she "can no longer see the path which might have led her back to it."² He understands, in spite of his reproaches, and in spite of his fresh proposals, that Juliette has drawn back on account of scruples which are not altogether "prejudices," as he had said to her at first. He is too hard on her when he writes as follows:³ "The enjoyments of self-esteem may allow you to have illusions about your situation for some time longer, but this will not last."⁴

It is hard to speak to a woman in this way of the approaching decline of her beauty, and to make her feel so distinctly the emptiness that unfortunate circumstances have put into her situation, and we cannot think without sadness of the feelings that must have been roused in Juliette's heart by such phrases. . . . "What wretched isolation you will find yourself in some day, if you renounce the bonds which give happiness to youth, pleasure to the age of maturity, and consolation to old age."⁵

Prince Augustus tried to divert her from her grief by study and by charity to the unfortunate. Juliette was flattering herself on the hope of seeing her friend again. She did not discourage him entirely and that, no doubt, is where she was weak. She therefore led him on to repeat what he had already said,⁶ to return to his former arguments. He does not know whether he wishes for or fears an interview. "I feel," he owns,⁷ "that to see you again and then to be separated, perhaps for ever, would make me extremely unhappy. But in spite of that, and in spite of the cruelty with which you

¹ Letter No. 18.

² Letter No. 19 from the Prince. It is dated January 12th.

³ January 12th.

⁴ Unpublished letter.

⁵ Same letter. Unpublished.

⁶ Letter of January 30th, 1808. Unpublished.

⁷ Letter 22 of January 30th.

treat me, I would still go, if necessary, to the other end of the universe to meet you again."

All these letters are worthy of being published for themselves, they are full of touching details. A letter of February 8th¹ refers to Mme. Récamier's piteous state of health. "You were unconscious for several hours, and you say that this often happens. The trouble which is making you wretched is ruining your health, too, and in spite of that, Juliette dear, you will not put an end to it all?"² The Prince endeavours to prove that honour and morality are on his side. Everything, too, brings back to his memory his past happiness. "A few days ago," he says,³ "I saw *Phèdre* given, translated by Schiller, the Racine of Germany. Comparing the delicious memories which this piece brought back to me, with the sadness I now feel, I realized that without you there is no more happiness for me." Sometimes he writes bitterly, but in the very next letter he asks forgiveness for this and protests that no reproaches were meant. Some of these nothings are charming. "The journey that you are going with M. R. [écamier] this spring, gives me some hope of seeing you again, but if your sentiments and your resolutions have changed this will only make me still more unhappy."⁴ This phrase, too: "Why do you no longer use that seal with the words *for ever*? Let the next letter from you, Juliette, dear, be fastened with this seal, I beseech you."⁵

It is characteristic of these great crises of passion that contradictions and repetitions are to be met with all through them. Juliette appeared to think that sincere wishes for happiness might now suffice for the Prince, and she accused him of doubting the affectionate sentiments she had for him. Augustus of Prussia gradually began to get calmer and to make some concessions. "I understand perfectly well," he declares in his letter of February 20th,⁶ "that you cannot just at present, without creating a sensation, take the steps necessary for uniting your lot for ever with mine. I only ask

¹ No. 23. ² Unpublished. ³ Letter No. 23. ⁴ Letter No. 24.

⁵ Letter No. 24, dated February 13th. Unpublished.

⁶ Letter No. 25. Unpublished.

you therefore . . . to confirm the vow you took." Mme. de Staél had advised Juliette to break off entirely with her husband, and the Prince refers to this advice. He tries once more to prove that he has "reason" on his side.¹ To sum up briefly, it was now four months since the separation had taken place and Juliette had not yet given the plain answer which would have ended the drama. It quite seems, according to the letter of March 5th, that up to this date she had only put off to a later day the Prince's demands, since he thanks her in this epistle. Some extracts from the correspondence of Augustus of Prussia will show us how the crisis ended.

"*March 9th.*²

" Your portrait will never leave me ; it will be a talisman to preserve my heart from all danger. But I shall have no need of it ; when one loves you, one could not care for any other woman. With what pleasure I shall read your *Souvenirs* ! On every page I shall find fresh reasons to love and esteem you."

"*March 22nd.*³

" On receiving your letter it was as though I had been struck by a thunderbolt. I can scarcely believe my eyes. Is it really you writing to me ? Your last letters still gave me the assurance of a sentiment to which I attach all my happiness, and you were even hurt at the least doubt I might have. After the vow you made to me *by the salvation of your soul* to keep in all its purity the sentiment that attached you to me, to do all that honour permitted you to break off your marriage, to have neither love nor coquetry for any other man, to see me again *as soon as possible and, whatever the future may be, to trust your destiny to my honour and to my love*, I could not without offence to you doubt your sentiments. Your letters assured me that absence, far from being detrimental to them, had done nothing but increase them and this test added much to my confidence. You have just destroyed all my illusions and made me the most un-

¹ Letter of February 20th.

² Letter No. 27. Unpublished.

³ Letter No. 30. Unpublished.

happy of men. You do not even deign to give me a reason, not even an untruth to explain so sudden a change. I do not understand such strange conduct, but I hope that you merely wrote your last letter in one of those moments of discouragement to which you are subject. . . . I beg you, Juliette dear, by all that is most sacred, not to reduce me to despair. *You do not know what I am capable of doing.* I put my destiny into your hands, for I am sure you will not treat me badly. . . . You have often spoken to me of your religious sentiments. I know that the ethics of your religion are not as strict as those of mine, but no religion exists which could allow of such cruel perfidy. . . . For the sake of your own happiness, and in order to keep the purity of your soul, you must abandon the situation in which you now find yourself. Your heart has become too sensitive to love for you to be able to hope to remain there¹ even in sacrificing all hope of happiness. . . ."

Mme. Récamier sent her portrait to Prince Augustus and he thanked her in very touching terms.² Political complications were also added to the moral complications which prevented the interview for which the Prince asked, either at Carlsbad or at Toplitz. The King of Prussia imposed upon his cousin military functions of great importance. In his correspondence with Mme. Recamier, which continued very regularly until March, 1809, when it seems to have commenced to slacken, Prince Augustus mingles with the expression of his unhappy love extremely interesting information about the great matters with which he is occupied.

On the 24th of October, 1809, when writing to Mme. de Staél, Prince Augustus sums up, not without bitterness, the history of his intercourse with Mme. Récamier.

"You want," he says, "to justify your friend's conduct towards me. If you knew what it has been, though, Madame, I am quite sure that you would change your opinion. However much she may have been to blame with regard to me, the love I had for her does not allow me to reveal this to

¹ In the original the word is *rester*.

² *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 143 and following.

you. You know that her behaviour made me think that she felt for me an attachment which would have been the happiness of my life, and that she even bound her destiny to mine by the most solemn vows. It may be that the circumstances, during which I learnt to know her, deceived her as to the nature of the sentiment she had for me. In spite of that, she has found cruel pleasure in keeping up, for more than a year, sentiments to which her heart no longer responded. Such conduct, which apparently passes in France for coquetry, seems to me to be the climax of perfidy. Could she really think that the fear of exposing myself to the jokes of a few journalists could be stronger with me than the love with which she had inspired me? Since I have learned to know your friend better I have broken off all intercourse with her, without lowering myself by making her the slightest reproach¹. . . ." From this letter, and from another one written by Prince Augustus on the 8th of December (1809) to Mme. de Staél, it is possible to sum up the different phases of this adventure. At Coppet, Mme. Récamier perhaps, believed, that she shared the sentiments felt for her by Prince Augustus. She made him a vow, and it appeared as though, for his sake, she was giving up her coquetry. On her return to Paris, in spite of the difficulties in which she found herself, and which recalled her to the reality of things, she continued corresponding with Prince Augustus and did not discourage him.

"Finally in March," he says,² "six months after my departure, she wrote to me that after serious thought about our situation and about the dangers to which she might expose me, she freed me from my vow, but consented to see me again in Switzerland or in Italy. As her letters contained the assurance and seemed to prove to me that absence, far from diminishing the affection she had for me, had given it still more force, I could only think that such a proposal sprang merely from over-delicacy. I answered her that, far from feeling freed from my vow her generosity and the affec-

¹ M. Ch. de Loménie's MSS. Letters from foreigners to Mme. Récamier.

² Letter of December 8th to Mme. de Staél.

tion which she proved to me bound me to her for ever and that, if necessary, I would go to the other end of the world to see her again. I refused a very important position that was offered to me under the pretext that I did not feel capable of filling it. She appeared to be deeply touched by my love, but asked me to come to France. In spite of the impropriety of such a step, the personal unpleasantness and, perhaps, dangers to which I exposed myself, I obtained from the near relative on whom I am dependent permission to go to Aix-la-Chapelle on the pretext of my health. I was just about to start when she wrote telling me that she could not go to this watering-place, but would go somewhere else a considerable distance away. Although her behaviour ought to have enlightened me finally about her true sentiments, I was prepared to take this step too, which no pretext could justify. Several months passed by while this correspondence was going on. Circumstances had changed, and I received definite orders to stay where I was."

According to the account of Prince Augustus, Mme. Récamier promised him again twice to go to Germany to see him and twice broke her word. "Indignant with her perfidy," he writes, "I then ceased all intercourse with her."

The letters from Prince Augustus which Juliette had scrupulously kept, confirm the exactitude of this account. The fragments that we have quoted indicate sufficiently the tone of this correspondence. On the 28th of October, 1808, Mme. Récamier sent Prince Augustus a ring with this inscription : "I shall see him again."¹ She refused some pearls that he wanted to send her and he begged her to accept some "amber ornaments" of no value.² At times he complains and at times he apologizes. After reading all these letters in which Prince Augustus finds fault with and quotes Juliette's own words, discusses them and gets his arguments from them, it is difficult to hesitate much as regards the interpretation of this adventure. At Coppet, where there was such constant over-excitement, Mme. Récamier allowed herself to be led on farther than was prudent. Perhaps even her imagination,

¹ According to letter No. 43 from the Prince. November 14th, 1808.

² From letter No. 39. July 26th, 1808.

skillfully excited as it was, deceived her as to the real state of her feelings. When back in Paris, separated from the terrible friend, she was able to think calmly both about herself and about those who were with her. She must have felt that her affection for Prince Augustus was not strong enough to allow her to cause M. Récamier irremediable sorrow and injury.¹ Undoubtedly, too, she feared public opinion. After committing the mistake of engaging herself she was weak enough not to free herself quickly enough. According to our opinion in this delicate affair, there was rather more than coquetry on her part and rather less than passion. She cannot be blamed very severely, however, since Prince Augustus forgave her very quickly and since she was so ready to punish herself. It is certain that she thought of ending her life by committing suicide. M. Ch. de Loménie possesses the letter, and has allowed us to see it, which she wrote to her husband when she had made this resolution. M. Louis de Loménie knew of this letter and alludes to it in his manuscript *Souvenirs*. It has recently been published from a copy.² Juliette intended to kill herself by taking opium pills, which she gave to her cousin Brillat-Savarin when she had renounced this idea. No details are known as to the reason which prevented her at the last moment from carrying out her plan.

However this may be, we can easily understand that Mme. Récamier, after a crisis of this kind, should have cared little to return to Coppet, where Mme. de Staél wanted to invite Prince Augustus for the summer of 1808. The letters from the banished woman always reached Juliette regularly and faithfully, telling how bored the traveller was in that country where there was "nothing to discover."³ Mme. de Staél herself realized the difficulties there would be for her friend in another visit to Coppet, and contented herself with

¹ Mme. Mohl (work quoted, p. 43 and following) is very favourable to Mme. Récamier. She speaks of the gay life of Prince Augustus. She tells that in 1846 his two daughters, who called themselves the Comtesses de Waldenburg, came to Paris. The elder was then thirty-eight. Mme. Récamier received them affectionately. They were the children it was said of a left-handed marriage.

² By J. Turquan. *Mme. Récamier*, pp. 133-134.

³ Letter No. 86 of M. Ch. de Loménie's collection (*Coppet et Weimar*, p. 128). Part of it copied by Ballanche in his unpublished *Biographie de Mme. R.*, pp. 52-53.

an interview with her, during the autumn, at Mme. de Saint-Julien's.¹ With the banished woman one anxiety outweighed all the others, and that was the fear that Constant no longer loved her. She confessed this with perfect frankness. "If I thought he did," she wrote to Mme. Récamier, "all the unhappiness of my life would vanish. But neither he, you, nor anyone will tell me the truth about this, and I feel myself that I dare not challenge the truth, as it would hurt me so much if it were not to be as I wish. I have been as giddy this winter as I could be, as giddy as a girl of eighteen. Nothing has come within a hundred leagues of my soul. There are so few people on earth who speak the kind of language without which not a chord of my heart is touched! I get worse in this respect every day; those I love have quite spoilt me."² The next letter contained declarations that were still more clear. After thanking Juliette for a dress she had sent, Mme. de Staél is alarmed at the idea that Benjamin may start for America.³

Mme. Récamier, then, in spite of her private troubles, was once more claimed for the rôle of confidant. She was asked to see Benjamin often and to remind him that he had wounded the friend of his youth to the very heart, and that Corinne would die, away from him. During this time Prince Augustus was writing to Mme. de Staél letters full of enthusiasm for Juliette; it is not difficult to imagine what he asked in them.⁴

Finally, after five months' residence there, Mme. de Staél left Vienna. She hoped to be at Coppet on the 30th of June and to find Mathieu de Montmorency there. She asked Benjamin Constant to join her at Dôle.⁵ Prince Paul

¹ This was near Besançon (according to Mme. de Staél's letter, No. 91 of the collection). This letter No. 91 was partially copied by Ballanche in the work already mentioned, pp. 53 and 54. The terrible letter from the Emperor to Fouché about Mme. de Staél is dated June 28th, 1808. From thenceforth the rupture was definitive (P. Gautier, *Mme. de Staél et Napoléon*, p. 226).

² Unpublished. According to a copy of M. Ch. de Loménie's. No. 87 of the MSS. *Lettres de Mme. de Staél*.

³ Unpublished passage of a letter (No. 88 of the MSS.) a great part of which is published in *Coppet et Weimar*, p. 129 and following, as far as *On leaving the city . . .*

⁴ From the same letter. See *Coppet et Weimar*, p. 130.

⁵ Letter No. 89 of the MSS. (a copy). *Coppet et Weimar*, pp. 130 and 131.

d'Esterhazy declared that he was in love with Mme. Récamier, but under existing circumstances this love had no other result than to procure for Mme. de Staél more frequent news of Juliette. On May 31st, the traveller wrote from Dresden. She had found a letter there from Prince Augustus, who was "more in love than ever." "Tell me what you are doing and what you wish," said Mme. de Staél to Juliette, "do not leave me in this vague state with your pretty little letters that do not tell me anything from your very heart."¹ On the 6th of June she started for Weimar, where she intended to stay until the 20th, in order to be at Lausanne on the 30th. Would Constant be at the place agreed upon, as he had promised so many times during the winter? Mme. Récamier was asked to see that the promise was carried out.²

On the 13th of June, Mme. de Staél wrote to Juliette from Weimar announcing her intention of staying as long as possible at Coppet, perhaps even the winter, "if she felt that she had the strength to do it."³ She hoped that her "dear young sister and protectress" would soon be able to buy a place on the way to Switzerland, near Lyons or Besançon. Mme. de Staél had been received in Saxony with so much consideration that she was in raptures of delight.⁴ Her letter of June 25th is dated from Frankfort. The idea of being at Coppet again gives her courage enough to joke with her friend. "What are you going to do," she asks, "with Prince Augustus and with Middleton? Give me your orders, dear sovereign, as regards this." A little farther on she says, "Adieu, Juliette dear, I have an idea that there is someone you like very much. Tell me whether I am mistaken. I am quite ready to receive him and to console the dead and wounded."⁵

¹ Unpublished passage of an original letter (No. 90 of M. Ch. de Loménie's MSS.). A fragment of the same letter was published in *Coppet et Weimar*, p. 98. It has been partially copied in Ballanche's work, pp. 60 and 61.

² The same letter.

³ Original letter (No. 91 of the MSS.) published in part in *Coppet et Weimar*, p. 132. Copied in Ballanche's *Biographie de Mme. R.*, pp. 61, 62, 63.

⁴ See in *Coppet et Weimar*, the anecdote of the clerk at the barrier.

⁵ Unpublished fragments of an original letter (No. 92 of M. Ch. de Loménie's MSS.). Part of this letter is published in *Coppet et Weimar*, pp. 138 and 139. It is copied almost entirely in Ballanche's book, p. 63 and following.

On the 17th of July, 1808 (we cannot be too careful in giving exact dates in a story which is still obscure and in which events took place with such rapidity), Mme. de Staél was once more installed at Coppet, and Mathieu de Montmorency was there with her.

On the 21st of July, Mathieu de Montmorency writes to Mme. Récamier from Coppet.¹

"It would be impossible, sweet Juliette, to choose a better place for reminding you of us than this, where the memory of you is so often present, where we talk about you and where you were once more preparing to come with all the kind devotion of friendship. Our friend will have spoken to you about this with her usual frankness and sincerity, and I, whose opinion you were good enough to ask, can only advise what might be called the reasonable plan, namely, to reserve for another time your sweet kindness. Our friend, with that uncertainty as regards her projects to which she is condemned by her position, intends merely to make a few excursions in this neighbourhood, and then to work in the midst of a somewhat limited company of men at a book on Germany. I think she looks fairly well after this long journey. And what about you, how is your summer to be spent? Are you going in for agriculture with the worthy Baron, whom, anyhow, you will not send to us?"

Baron de Vogt, of Hamburg, often wrote to Juliette. He gave her wise advice, and more particularly he warned her to beware of the thoughtless enthusiasm of her friend.²

Mme. de Staél, on her side, wrote to Juliette telling her of her intention to go again to Vienna at the beginning of the winter.³ Just about this time Mme. Récamier left her house in the Rue du Mont-Blanc and took up her abode with her husband, her father, and M. Simonard⁴ at No. 32, Rue Basse-du-Rampart. Middleton was in Rome, and it was said that he was "in love with an American woman who was not very

¹ The letter, No 18 of the collection of M. de Montmorency's letters, only bears the inscription Coppet, July 21st. It has not been published.

² See *Lettres de Mme. Dégérando*, p. 233.

³ Original letter No. 93 of M. Ch. de Loménie's MSS. *Coppet et Weimar*, p. 144 and following. Copied by Ballanche in his book, p. 63 and following.

⁴ *Sovr. et Corr.*, I, p. 152.

worthy of him.”¹ Eugène, Mme. de Staél’s faithful butler, the same one who in 1803 had the honour of a police report,² took the letters to Paris and the replies back to Coppet. He brought Mme. Récamier a dress from Vienna as a present from her friend. In the letter which accompanied it the banished woman told of her distress and her fears. “I am struggling between the longing to see you and the dread of doing you harm, for in this kind of thing one cannot refer to you. You always decide for friendship.”³

Mme. de Staél was interested in a fête that was to take place near Berne. As she could not have Mme. Récamier she invited M. de Sabran.⁴ Benjamin was “kind” to her, but she felt with sorrow that he was making sacrifices for her.⁵ Juliette copied out the news in Paris to send to this *château* which she had enlivened with her presence the year before, and to which prudence now prevented her from returning. Mme. de Staél thanked her for this and for other things which were of more value still to her. In her letter of August 4th she says: “You have sent Benjamin back more pleasant this year, and I attribute it to your sweet words. I am going to ask the same service from you for next winter.”⁶ Prosper de Barante was continuing his career and appeared to have given up Coppet. A certain calm now reigned in this *château*, but a calm that was full of sadness. The theatre was deserted. *Wallenstein* might have been given there, but the mistress of the house was entirely taken up with her work on Germany, which she thought at this time of publishing in the form of letters.⁷ She was counting on the Emperor’s possible residence in Paris during the winter to “tempt fortune for the last time,” by means of her son, Auguste.⁸ Camille Jordan went to see her, accompanied by all his family. Adrien de Montmorency, on the contrary, neglected her, and had a grudge against her.⁹ She expected Talma

¹ The same letter from Mme. de Staél.

² See Welschinger, *La Censure sous le premier Empire*, p. 330.

³ *Coppet et Weimar*, p. 145. This fragment is from the letter of July 17th.

⁴ The same letter.

⁵ The same letter.

⁶ Unpublished passage from the letter of August 4th. No. 95 of M. Ch. de Loménie’s MSS.

⁷ See *Coppet et Weimar*, p. 140.

⁸ Letter of August 4th.

⁹ The same letter.

and invited Lemercier to go there. Above all things she would have liked to see Mme. Récamier again. "If I wanted to write a novel," she said to her, "you would be necessary to me. . . . Imagination becomes dull through exile and even when abroad. There are some Polish women, though, in Vienna who have a great deal of charm, but rest assured that there is no one like you, and that you will, for the next twenty years, be superior to anyone. You are in every way the ornament of my life, and it becomes very dull when you are not there. . . . How wretched I should be if you took away from me the great gift you have made me of your friendship. I have a right to it now, because you have bound up with it part of my happiness."¹

The same protestations of friendship are to be found in a letter of August 25th. The calm continued on both sides. "It seems to me," Mme. de Staél writes to Mme. Récamier, "that a secret and rather sweet calm reigns in your letters. Tell me of yourself, dear friend; there is too much disinterestedness in your letters, and my affection is offended by it. I am writing, and reading for my writing. That is the chief thing in my days, all the rest is more tranquil than happy."²

Unfortunately this tranquillity could not be maintained, and a terrible storm was to burst on Coppet. Mme. de Staél was to go through a crisis much more grave than the one through which Juliette had only just passed. She was less resigned and more violent than her friend. No episode gives us a better opportunity of comparing the characters of Mme. de Staél and Mme. Récamier.

Baron de Vogt had perfectly well grasped this difference when, at the conclusion of the crisis, he wrote the following letter to Camille Jordan. One passage at least of this letter deserves to be remembered for its shrewdness: "Juliette is in the right way, she will need some support. Every human

¹ Unpublished fragments of the original letter of August 4th (1808). Nos. 95 and 97 of M. Ch. de Loménie's MSS., which should be read together.

² Unpublished fragment of the letter of August 25th. No. 96 of M. Ch. de Loménie's MSS. It should be preceded by the fragment already published in *Coppet et Weimar*, pp. 146 and 147.

being, my dear friend, has his own way of being good. This does not differ only in degree, but in kind. There is individual talent for virtue as for everything else, which is distinct and differs by indefinite shades. It is not the absolute, but the relative, degree and bearing that we must have in view. I do not for a moment think of separating in Juliette's mind her wish to please from that of being better, but to succeed in guiding her charm in a way that she may deserve the affectionate esteem of estimable men. The need that she has of self esteem, her delicate and perfect tact, and her high-mindedness will make that easy. Her sensibility turns rather towards friendship, and if it is to be her lot to owe her happiness to love, she will only come to it in this way. Do not forget that the other friend has quite another need of movement, of continual emotions, and that she is *blasée* in quite a different way as regards intelligence and keen sensations.”¹

The circumstances which accompanied the rupture between Mme. de Staél and Benjamin Constant confirm Baron de Vogt's opinion. The story of this rupture is not thoroughly known, but it had so great an influence on two existences worthy of interest that it is necessary to be exact at least about the time when it occurred. Here again Mme. Récamier's biography allows us to establish certain points, and to modify versions which have been presented to us. It is indispensable, too, for us to follow Benjamin Constant during these critical years of his existence, as he is soon to occupy a prominent place in our story.

Sainte-Beuve, usually so well informed, appears to have made a mistake of a year in his narration of this episode. He places the marriage of Constant with Charlotte de Hardenberg in June, 1808. He is right in this, but he appears to give the Sécheron interview, where Mme. de Staél meets Charlotte, the journey to Lyons of the three persons of the drama, and Mme. Constant's attempted poisoning as taking place about that time.² Sainte-Beuve wrote these details in 1834. Now

¹ Letter published in the *Nouvelle Revue*, V, XC VIII, 1896, pp. 275 and 276. The original of this is in the hands of M. Robert Boubée of Lyons.

² *Causeries du Lundi*, XI, p. 439 and 440.

in June (we have this from reliable documents), Mme. de Staël was at Weimar and the expressions contained in her letters to Mme. Récamier in August do not admit the hypothesis that a rupture had already taken place. Mme. de Staël did not dissimulate with Juliette and, even if she had wished to conceal this event from her best friend, we cannot imagine that she could have been hypocritical enough to congratulate herself on her intercourse with Constant just at the moment when she had the most cause to complain of it.

Lady Blennerhassett¹ also makes a few mistakes. She supposes that Benjamin Constant asked Mme. de Staël for the Sécheron interview as soon as she was back at Coppet. She bases this on a letter to the Grand-Duchess Louise, the date of which she gives as July 7th, 1808. But this letter, in the manuscript,² is dated from Coppet July 7th, and contains no exact words in favour of such an interpretation. Mme. de Staël writes : "On my way I found Benjamin and my son, and you had a great share in our conversations. I refreshed the minds of both of them by turning their gaze away from Paris towards you."³ Beside the fact that the rest of the letter, with its considerations on the Spanish War, on M. de Talleyrand, on a possible journey of Mme. de Staël to Nice, is scarcely that of a person disturbed by an event as grave as that of this rupture, the passage that we have quoted shows the return of the exile taking place in the way she had hoped. She adds, very calmly, in the same letter : "I think Benjamin is going to publish his *Valstein*. I am persuading him urgently to do so. He throws himself at the feet of Your Highness."⁴

Lady Blennerhassett makes a mistake then in not following the indications given in the *Lettres de Benjamin Constant à sa famille*, and in preferring the information given by Sainte-Beuve. The *Journal intime*, which ought to tell us, is silent on this point. After a note dated December 27th, 1807, it does not begin again until the year 1811.⁵ Fortun-

¹ III, p. 291 and following.

² No. 14 of Mme. de Staël's manuscript letters. We do not contest the date of 1808, however. ³ *Coppet et Weimar*, p. 142. ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

⁵ See pp. 128 and 129. Dr. Melegari's account is confused and in parts erroneous.

ately the *Carnet* or note-book, from which Sainte-Beuve published a few valuable pages, comes to our aid a little.¹ This note-book fixes Constant's secret marriage as taking place on the 5th of June, 1808. The events are quoted in the following way: "Fury of my old cousins and aunts with Mme. de Staél. She arrives at Lausanne. Return with her to Coppet. Momentary peace. Secret marriage June 5th, 1808. Interview between Charlotte and Mme. de Staél. Strange rumours about Charlotte at Interlaken. Why I will not investigate them. 1809. Superfluous struggles with Mme. de Staél. Debates with Charlotte as to the best thing to do. Grief and violence of Mme. de Staél. Stay at Lyons. Charlotte's attempt to poison herself. Last intimate but stormy stay with Mme. de Staél." It is this text, made clearer both by the *Lettres de Benjamin Constant à sa famille*, and by the letters, still partially unpublished, of Mme. de Staél to Mme. Récamier, which gives us some idea of the story of a rupture that was to be fertile in consequence for Juliette.

We saw Benjamin Constant installed in Paris in February, 1808, correcting his *Wallenstein* and attending Dr. Gall's lectures. By certain indications in his letters we can see that once more an evolution was taking place in him and he was preparing for grave actions. His aunt had just written to him and pointed out to him the advantage of celibacy. "I do not," he replies, "echo your praise of celibacy. At present, when society bores me enough for it to be painful to me to have to go outside in search of what really does not give me pleasure any more, I cannot believe that the solitude of an old bachelor is a delightful thing."² The restlessness which was natural to him did not allow him to remain long in Paris. He imagined for himself the reason that his stay there might serve as a pretext to Mme. de Staél for some imprudence.³ At the end of May he was at Brevans, near Dôle, and here, though he led a monotonous life, according to his own account he was fairly happy.⁴ He had

¹ Sainte-Beuve. *Causeries du Lundi*, p. 35.

² Letter of March 7th, 1808. (*Lettres de B.C. à sa famille*, p. 244.)

³ *Ibid.*, p. 246.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 248.—"Benjamin is doing as he likes now and finds much happiness in making the last days of his old father pleasant. He is some-

left Paris without seeing Mme. Récamier again and he excused himself to her in a charming note, a little stilted perhaps, but a note in which the reproaches themselves had the gentleness of endearments. "Your plans are vague," he writes to her, "and you take it in turns to be discouraged when you are sad, and indolent when you are not sad. I would neither complain, though, of your discouragement nor of your indolence if I were with you, because Nature has put a special charm into all your faults."¹

In July, Constant was established at Coppet,² from whence he continued to write flowery letters to Juliette. He was finishing his *Wallenstein*, and he congratulated himself on a certain improvement in Mme. de Staél's sentiments brought about by her journey to Vienna. He is anxious to know whether Prosper de Barante is in Paris. He questions his friends discreetly about the employment of what he styles the "mysterious hours," and flatters himself on taking up again with Juliette, who is always grappling with a thousand "shades" of sentiments, the rôle of confidant which he had just been playing with her.³

Every step that Constant from henceforth took away from Mme. de Staél brought him nearer to Mme. Récamier, without the latter, certainly, having wished it or lent herself to this. With Mme. de Staél we know how he proceeded. He exercised the most infinite skill in avoiding, or at least delaying, the violence that he foresaw. In June, 1808,⁴ he

times here and sometimes at Coppet. He has received 100 louis for his tragedy and it is going to be printed." Letter from Rosalie de Constant to Ch. de Constant, August 26th, 1808. (Public Library, Geneva, McC. 18, 3rd portfolio).

¹ *Letters from B.C. to Mme. R.*, pp. 2 and 3.

² From the letter dated July 12th (1808) to Mme. Nassau (Menos, p. 249 and following), it is easy to see what the state of Benjamin's mind was at this time. This letter shows that he had just seen Charlotte. "For more than eight months I had seen her almost uninterruptedly in the most complete solitude." He even acts a comedy as regards his aunt and yet he speaks of "the more definite engagements that he had just taken," of the "dissimulation" which is imposed upon him and of his "situation which is so complicated." In our opinion Constant was already married when he wrote that letter, but he was concealing this union with the utmost care. The whole of this letter should be read.

³ *Lettres de B. C. à Mme. R.*, pp. 3, 4, 5, and 6.

⁴ Eug. Ritter (*Notes sur Mme. de Staél*, p. 79 and following) places the

was married to Charlotte secretly at Brevans, by a Protestant minister. He then considered, with his wife, the best way to announce this union. It was certainly at Sécheron, as Sainte-Beuve says, that the conversation in which all was revealed took place,¹ but this interview did not take place until about May 10th, 1809.² It was then only, and this is a sure fact, that Benjamin Constant gave Mme. de Staél his promise not to reveal the marriage.³ Charlotte de Hardenberg agreed to remain alone at Brevans from the day following this strange union. It was on the 15th of December, 1808, that after a stay at Coppet, where he had accepted a rôle in *La Sunamite*, a comedy by Mme. de Staél, Benjamin Constant went to Brevans to fetch his wife, whom he had every reason to call his "prisoner." He made this journey through the snow and it took him four days, in spite of the eight horses harnessed to his sledge and the numerous workmen employed to clear his road.⁴ As is seen, we are maintaining for the marriage the date given in the note-book. This statement, which Constant kept for himself and which he never thought, later on, of giving to his secretary, is certainly the most trustworthy document we have about this complex story. The date of June 5th, 1808, coincides well with a visit of

marriage in December, but his arguments do not convince us and we keep to the date which is so clearly given in the note-book. Benjamin Constant might certainly in writing have mixed up the 25th of November and the 3rd of October (Ritter, p. 80) but he would less easily have confounded in his note-book his pleasant visit in June and his terrible December journey.

¹ We take for a basis the extremely explicit letter from B. C. to the Comtesse de Nassau, dated May 16th, 1809 (*Lettres de B. C. à sa famille*, p. 308 and following).

² On May 16th, 1809, Rosalie de Constant wrote to Ch. de Constant : "Benjamin is at Coppet. This visit does not agree with what I know of his position. So many things are inexplicable in this world ! Often they are not worth being explained." (Geneva Library, Mcc. No. 18, 3rd portfolio).

³ *Lettres de B.C. à sa famille*, p. 315.—In a letter dated May 20th [1809] he says : "I cannot consent to violate my promise ten days after giving it."

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 288.—The letter of December 15th, 1808, to the Comtesse de Nassau is certainly from a man who is about to marry. We think that here, too, Benjamin was deceiving his aunt. He says in this same letter : "I have, perhaps, too much of the fatal talent of not mentioning facts . . . Is not this a confession ?

Constant's to Brevans.¹ We only postpone the date of the revelation to Mme. de Staél.²

Benjamin spent the first months of the year 1809 in Paris. It was then that he gave his *Wallenstein* to the public.³ Chateaubriand, a little later on, gave his *Martyrs*. On the 1st of May, Benjamin wrote to his aunt : "I am going direct (to port) now ; but there is still a sandbank to cross. We are taking the most gentle method, the most generous, and the most delicate one. I cannot say that it does not give us momentary pain, but with two tranquil consciences and two hearts that love each other one can get through many things."⁴

The terrible interview then took place at Sécheron, near Geneva. Sainte-Beuve has given an account of it,⁴ and this time we have nothing to contradict in his story. According to him, Constant sent for Mme. de Staél without warning her of the reason for which he wanted her. Mme. Constant was introduced to Mme. de Staél at the inn and, in her grief mingled with anger, what "irritated Corinne the most," was "the German insipidness of this sentimental person who could only repeat over and over again, 'You see, Benjamin is so good !'"⁵

The comic comes in here to temper the tragic. The day following this storm Constant returned to Coppet,⁶ no doubt

¹ A letter to the Comtesse de Nassau is dated : Brevans, June 10th, 1808.

² J. H. Menos fixes the marriage in December (*Introduction aux Lettres de B. C.*, p. 44).

³ J. H. Menos. *Introduction aux Lettres de B. C.*, p. 291.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 306. ⁵ *Courseries du Lundi*, XI, p. 439.

⁶ On the 15th of October, 1808, Benjamin Constant wrote from Coppet this letter to Rosalie, which has not been published before : "What has become of you, my dear Rosalie ? I have not had a line from you for three weeks and you let me go to Dôle and come back without giving me the least sign of life. My journey was rather wretched on account of the frightful weather I had for going and returning. I am very glad though that I went. My presence did my father good and I was able to calm him about something which had thrown him into a state of agitation that was trying both for his happiness and his health. In order to pacify him I was obliged to do all that he wished, but I had decided on it for some time, so that it did not cost me anything, for nothing does cost anything when one has made up one's mind. Write me a few lines then, for I am held fast here by the printing of *Wallenstein*, the first act of which is in hand." . . . Public Library, Geneva. McC. 36b. The date and

to ensure the preservation of that friendship which Mme. de Staél had promised him. Charlotte had undertaken to go to Germany and to let nothing be rumoured about until Mme. de Staél's departure for America.¹ "I am awaiting your reply," Constant wrote to his aunt, "before letting the angel, who causes my happiness, leave Sécheron."² In the meantime, *the angel*, dragged about from inn to inn, begged to be allowed to take rooms at Lausanne. After being sequestered in the snows of Brevans the said angel was kept in sight at Sécheron. The Comtesse de Nassau rightly declared that it was a romance *à la Mme. Radcliffe*.³ She admonished her nephew, but he was always easy-going and lavish in fine words. He was rather alarmed now at the possible hostility of Mme. de Staél⁴ and, being both weak and cruel, frequently confounding his honour and his happiness, he argued, insisted on secrecy about his act, and thought of nothing but the means of postponing the public declaration of his union.⁵

indication of origin are in Constant's handwriting.—On the 14th of October, 1808, Rosalie de Constant wrote to Ch. de Constant as follows: "I have nothing to say against the lady of Coppet, but you are addressing yourself to the wrong person for sending her your compliments. I hope I shall never see her again in my life. If she came into any place where I was I should rush away so far that I should not be seen again for a long time, and yet I like her books. I even vowed I would never read what she had written. A woman who puts herself in the position in which I have seen her, and who gives herself up to such inordinate passions, degrades all the intelligence she may possess. The influence she continues to have over Benjamin, who suffers but cannot get away from it, does not make me love her. He ought to be still with his father, as he does him all kinds of good, and as you know he has returned very much to his natural affections." (Compare J. H. Menos, Introduction, p. 42). We will quote Rosalie again when writing to Charles on the 1st November, 1808: "Benjamin remains a slave at Coppet, detesting and despising his own situation. The lady continues putting the Bible into comedy and making him play rôles which expose him to the sarcasm of the spectators. There is nothing for it but to leave him to it and to resign ourselves." On the 13th of December, 1808, Rosalie wrote to Charles as follows: "Benjamin is with his father, he will go, he says, from there to Paris . . . I see him walking over muddy ground and at every step he gets some splashes. The other day in the counting-house of M. Hensch of Geneva, full as it was of clerks and people, she had a scene with M. d'Illens (?) who owes her some money that he will not return to her. She said to him 'You are a swindler!' . . . 'And you, Madame, a c' he replied. 'No, Monsieur, I am not a c . . . considering that I am a widow and love M. Constant.' Is it not frightful to have our name dragged into things like this?" (Public Library, Geneva, McC. No. 18, 3rd portfolio.)

¹ *Lettres de B. C.*, p. 309.

² *Ibid.*, p. 313.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 312.

⁴ J. H. Menos, p. 314.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 316.

What mysteries and what stratagems! But we have Benjamin in this just as he was, constantly a victim of his own inconsistency, and certainly much less to be pitied than blamed.

When the letters from Mme. de Staél to Mme. Récamier are published, if indeed they ever should be published, we shall have, in addition to valuable information about Juliette's life in 1808 and 1809, the echo of the great grief felt by Corinne during this crisis, from which, it may be said, she never recovered. At the very time when she was the most threatened by Benjamin she was uneasy about Prosper. Prosper de Barante went to Paris in 1808, both to have his *Tableau du XVIII^e siècle* printed and to find out what chances there were of leaving the sub-prefectship of Bressuire.¹ He stayed there until the end of December. His book was edited by that time, and he had made sure of the opinions of those critics to which he attached the greatest importance. Mme. de Staél and Benjamin Constant wrote him articles in the newspapers.² On the 13th of February, 1809, he was appointed Prefect of Vendée, and this brought him again to Paris. "I was twenty-six," writes De Barante in his *Souvenirs*, "and I had gone ahead rather quickly in my career. This was a tranquil satisfaction for me. I find, in the notes in which I usually wrote down a résumé of my day and of my state of mind, how anxious I was lest this favour should appear to have been obtained by the renunciation of my opinions and of my friendships. I did not intend to sacrifice these. But no one had any such idea."³

In Paris, Barante went to see Mme. Récamier. Mme. de Staél was uneasy and took offence at his visits. We already know when and how they commenced. During this period, which was so full in the life of Mme. de Staél and Mme. Récamier, Barante, too, had his place, and played his part. We are obliged to speak of it, as malicious things have been said about this, too, at Juliette's expense. M. Anatole France, who appears to have seen Mme. Récamier's letters to Barante, remembers some passages which, according to him,

¹ *Souvenirs du baron de Barante*, I, p. 278.

² *Ibid.*, p. 287.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 289.

were calculated to impair the traditional "holiness" of Mme. Récamier.¹ He quotes, in particular, a little note which she slipped one evening into the young man's hand, and of which he does not pretend to give the exact words.

These insinuations and these reticences lead us to wonder what the intercourse really was between Mme. Récamier and Prosper de Barante. A few quotations taken from Barante's letters will show us this, as well as complete our information with regard to the group upon which our attention is concentrated. A new light is thrown upon Mme. Récamier and upon Mme. de Staél herself by all this.²

A first letter, carefully dated from Breslau, February 7th, 1807, in the fine, small handwriting of Barante, marks the commencement of this intimacy. "Thanks to your sweet variableness, which, as we agreed, is partly naïve coquetry," says young Prosper, "you expressed at my departure regrets that were not very keenly felt, but such as they were the memory of them remained in my mind a long time. I so thoroughly expected to leave you without your noticing it, that I was agreeably surprised to hear you saying farewell to me. I have had news often from a friend whom we love, but without any regularity or punctuality. That person, and all my friends in general, thought that I should not write, and this was unjust. . . ." A year later, at the end of 1808, Prosper was at Tours, and on the 15th of December was preparing to start for Poitou.³

"You ought to come to Bressuire," he says to Juliette, "You would not be unhappy there. Why is this proposal absurd? How sweet it would be for me if it were reasonable! . . . I beseech you to continue confiding in me. Although you do not tell me much it makes me happy. . . . I should very much like to find a letter from you at Bressuire, in the first place to have news of you, and then to try to find out from your words how my departure affected you, and whether it left any void for you. It is impossible to believe that one is necessary to you. You can easily make up again the amount

¹ See *Vie littéraire*, IV, p. 29 and following.

² These letters, only partially classified, are among M. Ch. de Loménie's MSS.

³ The post-mark is December 18th, 1808.

of affection you accord. When one risks so little there is no need to choose the person in whom one confides. . . .”

On the 18th of December there is another letter.¹

“I arrived yesterday, Madame, and have received a letter from you, to-day. Thank you for this kind punctuality. I should have liked this letter to have been a little more familiar. *Monsieur*, and nothing more, grieved me a little, but anyhow you have written to me; you have given me this proof of your sweet remembrance, thank you for it. You tell me, too, that you miss me and, although you said it in a polite way, I have taken this as a sign of friendship. I certainly deserve it, I can tell you. I challenge all the Princes of the House of Prussia as regards sincere attachment, real wishes for the future and complete submission to a charm such as I had not suspected. . . . I have had nothing from Coppet. I will keep my promise. Do write, it is unkind not to write. You will be thought guilty, and it is very unjust, for you had no idea of such a thing. You even affirm that I am not. . . .”²

The letter of January 7th³ does not compromise Juliette either, as there is no question of anything but friendship.

“Thank you, Madame, for having thought that your letter might have distressed me. You saw that I was affected by it, and I think you will not be surprised to find that I am a little anxious about the opinion you may have of me. I had not the presumption to believe that it was a fleeting inclination. Why should there be any revolutions in a tranquil and well-regulated friendship? One ought at least to reap the advantages. In a more ardent sentiment the return to calm consoles one for many storms. Friendship has not so many ways of atoning. . . . I have had no fresh letters from Geneva. It will be strange if it should be a printed work that has changed Mme. de St(ael)'s affection into resentment which, I fancy, is rather keen. I am still very much hurt at the motive that she has imagined with regard to my silence about M. Necker. It is allowable, and particularly for her,

¹ The post-mark is December 25th, 1808.

² None of these extracts has ever been published.

³ The post-mark is January 23rd, 1809.

to be proud for one's father's sake. But it might be supposed, nevertheless, that it is possible to have a different opinion. Not at all. She prefers believing that by this omission I wanted to pay my court to the powers that be. . . .”

In February, 1809, there is a fresh letter still more clear. “ You are wrong, Madame, but what is the use of telling you so or of endeavouring to prove it? You fling ice with both hands over a sentiment which had such charm for me and which would have prevailed over me if it could have touched you. You have banished from your letters all that remained of intimacy and of confidence. . . . Anyhow, you wish it to be thus. You do not wish my thoughts to wander in a sweet and pleasant direction. . . . But believe me, no one has had so keen an attraction for me. I still feel it, although you have worked hard to discourage me. When I read these letters, full of witty and polite friendship which cast all idea of sentiment a thousand leagues away, I saw behind them that face so beautiful and so sweet, that grace and that simplicity of word and manner and, in spite of you, I am completely captivated. Mme. de Stael continues to be offended and offensive. I shall get used to these bitter terms and she will find me hardened to the resentment that she lavishes upon me. . . . I have Benjamin's tragedy. . . . I have always considered that you, and perhaps even Mme. de Stael, do not sufficiently appreciate Benjamin's intelligence and kindnessness. . . .”¹

Barante is distressed, too, to know that Mme. Récamier is sad and discouraged, a prey to vague grief and weariness.

“ This is the heaviest kind of trouble to bear,” he writes.² “ Afterwards one says ‘ Ah, that good time, I was very wretched! ’ The memory of Montreuil, of the beginning of a short time so sweet and happy, is more enjoyable for me than for you. . . . I continue to have letters from Mme. de St—, and I answer them. She is beginning to soften down. I should have been sorry if enmity had succeeded the affectionate intercourse which has not been a success between her and me. Mme. de St[ael] complains of your silence. She says that

¹ Date given by the two post-marks.

² Letter of February 7th. Post-mark February 13th, 1809.

you are cool with her, and that it is always the one in power who keeps up any grudge. I think you would do well to write to her. You are far from having wronged her, I can certainly bear testimony to that. You never even thought of it. It is true that you had very little merit in that, but anyhow, it is so. . . .”

Barante begged Mme. Récamier not to send his letters to Mme. de Staél.

“They would perhaps hurt her,” he says to Juliette.¹ “She would see that I had wanted what I could not get and, as it is only on the second point that it matters to you to be justified, your letters should only be offered as a proof from which there could be no appeal. I am very much distressed that you should be tormented and worried about all this, but do not add to this the slight annoyance of thinking that I am vexed, as I should first have to have the right to be. You have given me your friendship and your confidence, and I thank you for this a thousand times. There might be sweeter memories still of you, but the others will always be dear to me, and I trust that I shall not only have the enjoyment of memory as I hope to enjoy again the pleasure of your intimacy. I will do my utmost to go no farther than you wish. . . . I owned to Mme. de St. . . . that my stay in Paris had no other pleasure for me than that of seeing you every day. It is not necessary to enter into further details. Write to her in a sweet and friendly way. . . .”

The incident was soon over. On the 20th of February Prosper assures his friend of this :

“Mme. de St[ael] has written me a letter in which she speaks very kindly of you. Your first word had quite soothed her. You can do anything with us all and everyone gives way after a word of friendship from you.”²

Soon after this Barante had a great sorrow. He lost a young brother whom he loved dearly. “In this circumstance,” he declares to Mme. Récamier, “Mme. de St[ael] was the very perfection of kindness and interest, and I repented having been so irritated by her reproaches. I see, too,

¹ Letter of February 10th. Post-mark February 15th, 1809.

² Post-mark February 24th, 1809.

Madame, that you and she are again on better terms. This journey to Geneva is sure for me. I wish that you were as decided about it. But I shall go early. . . .”

The fragments we have just quoted seem to leave no doubt as to the nature of the sentiment between Mme. Récamier and Prosper de Barante. There was nothing more between them than friendship, and even that was, as far as Juliette was concerned, very reserved. She did all that she could to calm an ardour to which she would not respond and, as he said to her repeatedly, she did nothing to justify the suspicions which came to her from Coppet.

Juliette offered to communicate Prosper's letters to Mme. de Staél. The latter refused this, and on the 9th of February wrote to excuse herself to her friend. “I was wrong,” she says, “and even if I had been right there is nothing among other sentiments worth the one that you deign to show me. I do not want to see Prosper's letters, I do not want anything but your affection again. If you should take away from me this sentiment, which has been my sole consolation for three years, I feel that life would have lost the last charm of which exile had not deprived me. Write me a letter to reassure me. You are so much beloved and so worthy of this, that one dare not count on all the tender pity of your heart, and I fancy that you have forgotten me because it seems to me that I deserve to be forgotten, but the sweet surprise of your delightful letter caused me an emotion which I cannot describe to you. I shall write a letter to send by Auguste who is leaving for Paris, but I did not want to delay an hour in embracing you. I am on my knees in order to kiss your pretty feet and ask your forgiveness for my extreme susceptibility, which is the result of misfortune. Forgive me, too, for considering it impossible for anyone to see you without loving you. This conviction comes from my heart more than from everyone's admiration.”¹ A letter of the 15th of February seems to indicate that Mme. Récamier had shown a little displeasure, and in any case that the correspondence of the two friends was not so frequent. “Tell me,” writes Mme. de Staél, “what you think of Benjamin, as regards himself and

¹ Unpublished autograph letter. M. Ch. de Loménié's MSS. No. 118.

me, and what people say of *Valstein*, of the Prince de Ligne, etc. In short, let me have that correspondence again in which you used to give all, but in which I was so happy to have all. We are still quarrelling, Prosper and I, over his inconceivable silence about my father in his speech. What do you think of it? Persuade our Baron de Vogt to come to Coppet this year. He is a man who gives me fresh courage in life to a degree that you will understand, as we have that fellow-feeling, too, that we like him very much. What is this novel by Mme. de Chevreuse? In conclusion, it is now three months since I had a talk with you, and I would give all the rest of my life for a few days with you.”¹

In the early part of 1809, Prosper de Barante put in an appearance at Geneva for three days.² He had just lost his younger brother, and was hastening to his father in order to console him a little. Mme. de Staél saw him. “When talking of you with Prosper,” she wrote on the 14th of April to her dear Juliette, “I discovered a proof of your friendship which touched me deeply. I will not tell you of it now, but it is engraved on my heart. . . . Persuade Benjamin, I beg of you, to start at once and come to see me. He hurt me so much this winter that he might come now to console me. . . . I saw Prosper again with the same feelings as eighteen months ago. It seems to me that he has improved as regards facility of conversation. Let me know what he tells you of his stay here and, I beseech you, Juliette dear, do not put anything between our two hearts. I have such affection and such gratitude, so high an idea of you, that I am wretched when you put a thorn between my love for you and my confidence in you.” At the end of the same letter she says: “No one can have any idea of what exile is. It is the hundred-headed hydra as regards unhappiness.”³

There are some kinds of unhappiness worse still than exile. Mme. de Staél must have felt this cruelly on the occasion of that interview at Sécheron which we have related and which

¹ Unpublished autograph letter, dated February 15th. No. 116 of M. Ch. de Loménié's MSS.

² *Souvenirs du baron de Barante*, I, p. 290.

³ Unpublished autograph letter dated April 14th. M. Ch. de Loménié's MSS. No. 103,

we place about the 10th of May, 1809.¹ It is, perhaps, admissible to suggest that, in spite of all, the singular aptitude which Mme. de Staél possessed of throwing herself into exterior things, and more especially the variety of sentiments which about this time had a place in her heart, must have deadened a little for her the shock of the great revelation. We have seen that Benjamin Constant returned to Coppet the day after this outburst.

On the 7th of June, 1809, Mme. de Staél arrived at Lyons with "her son, Auguste, some aides-de-camp, and all her household."² She went there to be present at Talma's performances. The Commissioner-General of Police, who gives this information, adds: "I have not yet been able to see all the passports of the gentlemen who accompany her. I shall have the honour of sending Your Excellency the list to-morrow. I think I caught sight of M. Benjamin Constant among them."³ Constant certainly was at Lyons; he had brought Charlotte with him.⁴ He wrote as follows, not without reason, to his aunt: "I owe it to Heaven to have given me a wife whose mind is able to share all."⁵ And in order to justify his conduct he adds: "What I have discovered by reiterated experiences, and especially by the latest, is that I was much stronger when present than when absent."⁶ With the same serenity in his unconsciousness he goes on to declare that he had on his side "reason, right, and duty."⁷ Charlotte only stayed a few days at Lyons. She went to Paris to wait, as usual, until something fresh happened.⁸ In the midst of Constant's untruths it is somewhat difficult to see where one is and to recognize truth. It is most probably at this time, though, that Charlotte attempted to poison herself, as the

¹ A letter from B. C. dated by Menos, July 27th, 1809, says (p. 345): "For the last month Mme. de S. has known about my marriage. . . ." But this letter in the manuscript is only dated the 27th. The remainder of the date is left to conjecture.

² Sismondi was among those who accompanied her. Compare his *Lettres à Mme. d'Albany*, p. 89 and following.

³ Archives nationales F. 7, 6331, quoted by H. Welschinger. *La Censure sous le premier Empire*, p. 344.

⁴ *Lettres de B.C. à sa famille*, p. 320.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 321.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 322.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 322.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 323.

Carnet owns, as Sainte-Beuve tells in his waggish way,¹ and as it is easy to understand.

Mme. Récamier, in the midst of these circumstances, joined Mme. de Staél at Lyons. She "arrived yesterday evening," states the police report of June 19th, "she has come here for Mme. de Staél, and is to go with her to Coppet."² It is at this date, perhaps, that the following unpublished letter from Corinne should be placed:—

"Dear friend, I am really going to see you then. I am most excited, but I am uneasy about your health. Why Aix? At last we shall be able to have a talk. Camille will tell you that I am in the country until nine o'clock. I shall pass your door at two o'clock. Shall you arrive to-day? I shall wait for you at the Hôtel d'Europe; I should have liked you to stay at the same hotel. Dear Juliette, it seems to me that I am dreaming this happiness of seeing you again. A thousand messages to our friend. Sunday at two o'clock."³

It appears, from this note, as though Mme. Récamier had first intended going to Aix, but the two friends were soon at Coppet again together, reconciled after their fleeting difficulties, and both of them anxious to have a little peace and calm.

During this summer of 1809, *Phèdre* was played at Coppet, and Mme. Récamier consented to take the part of Aricie. Her niece acknowledges that her success in this rôle was due to her beauty, and that she always had a somewhat unpleasant remembrance of it.⁴ Gaudot, a native of Neufchâtel, whom we have met before and who was present at the performance, is, on the contrary, warm in his praise of this Aricie of a day. According to him, M. de Sabran was detestable as Hippolyte because he "exaggerated to an excess and to ugliness French gallantry and refinement." Auguste de Staél "looked perfectly old" as Théramène. M. de Prangins, as Thésée, was much taller than all the other actors, who "were all

¹ *Causeries du Lundi*, XI, pp. 439 and 440.

² *Archives nationales*, F⁷, 6331, quoted by Welschinger, *La Censure sous le premier Empire*, p. 345.

³ Autograph letter. No. 100 of M. Ch. de Loménie's MSS. *Lettres de Mme. de Staél*.

⁴ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 152.

remarkably small." Mme. Récamier was delicious as Aricie. "It was," says Gaudot, "the triumph of Nature over art, for how could anyone help approving a beautiful person whom gentleness, simplicity, modest charm, and a faint shade of melancholy show up to perfection." Needless to say that Mme. de Stael took the rôle of *Phèdre*, in which she excelled.¹

Prince Augustus, who was desperate, wrote Mme. Récamier a letter breaking everything off.² "After having deceived me so infamously, and after breaking the most solemn vows that love could invent, you now dare," he writes, "to blame my conduct towards you ! Because my pride would not allow me to lower myself by reproaching you, you think that I am indifferent or that I am seeking happiness elsewhere. Unfortunately, I have not yet succeeded in arriving at that indifference which I should so much like to have, and I know of no other diversion than that of being as useful to my country as circumstances allow. . . . I feel, unfortunately too late, that we were not made to give each other happiness. I could not be happy with a wife who feigns sentiments which she has perhaps never experienced, and who puts conventionalities above morality. . . . I beg you not to write to me any more ; your letters hurt me too much. Adieu for the last time."

¹ Pl. Godet. *Hist. Littéraire de la Suisse française*, p. 420.

² July 13th [1809]. M. Ch. de Loménie's MSS.

CHAPTER IX

THE VISIT TO CHAUMONT-SUR-LOIRE

(SEPTEMBER 1809—JUNE 1811)

Mme. Récamier's return to Paris.—Coquetry or kindness.—Letters from Mme. de Staël and from Mathieu de Montmorency.—Mlle. Amélie Cyvoct.—The *Souvenirs* of Sophie de Barante and of Chamisso.—Auguste de Staël's love for Mme. Récamier.—Mme. de Staël and Prosper de Barante.—The stay at Fossé.—Mme. Récamier is entrusted with obtaining the approval of the censor for the book on Germany; failure of the steps she takes.—Mme. de Staël's despair.—M. de Barante's discharge.—Mme. Récamier decides to go to Coppet.

BALLANCHE, in his unpublished *Biographie de Mme. Récamier*, gives us certain information about Juliette's life in Paris about the year 1810, which explains to us why the severities of the Empire were soon to affect her. “The illustrious persons of old and new France,” he tells us, “seemed to come to her in search of a neutral and friendly ground, and more than once even, during this strange time when the greatest destinies were constantly to be seen tottering, kings and princes did not fear to meet there men of every régime, and of every opinion. In her presence pretensions became inoffensive, and memories lost their bitterness. She received all the vanquished ones, and remained faithful to all those who were oppressed. At her house were to be met the de Montmorencys, whose courageous independence has been perpetuated by Mme. de Staël; Camille Jordan, who had already proved himself so noble an orator and so generous a citizen; the Duke d'Abrantès, brave among the brave; and Bernadotte,

the adventurous General who was soon to mount the throne of an adventurous king. . . . ”¹

“A man who saw everything, who neglected nothing, for whom all that was not complete abnegation was audacious resistance . . . how could he explain to himself such gatherings at the house of a person whom fortune had abandoned with such a crash? There were no longer luxurious festivities to which all Europeans of distinction were bidden. The Prince of Orange, at present King of the Netherlands; he who was to be King of Bavaria; the Prince of Mecklenburg, brother of the beautiful Queen of Prussia; Masséna, and Prince Eugène continued to frequent a house which had been stripped of all its splendour. The Ministers even of the Ruler of the world slipped away from Court and came to refresh themselves in the midst of society which they liked better, and the Ruler of the world said bad-temperedly: ‘How long has it been the custom for the Council to be held at Mme. Récamier’s?’ ”²

About Mme. Récamier’s life, after her return from Coppet until her departure for Chaumont-sur-Loire, we have some information from the letters of Mme. de Staél and of Mathieu de Montmorency. The affectionate and devout Mathieu was again giving her pious counsel. Mme. de Staél was thinking of setting out for America. Her son, Auguste, in his turn, was in love with Juliette.³ Having slightly recovered ap-

¹ It was in August, 1810, that the Swedish Diet chose Bernadotte as heir-apparent to Charles XIII.

² Ballanche, pp. 72, 73, 74.

³ The following are a few fragments from Auguste de Staél’s letters to Mme. Récamier: “How do you think I can help being cut up with grief? This bell, this little post, everything makes me so wretched. I was so thoroughly destined for spending my life with you . . . and now a horrible pang at my heart, no more hope, no future! Your situation grieves me. I pity myself, too. Everything, oh God, everything rather than to be separated from you!” . . . There is another letter, also without date: “Adélaïde, dear Adélaïde, every day must needs bring fresh trouble. What a cruel situation! I have received a letter from my mother, in which she tells me that the Prefect of Geneva has sent her word that M. Schlegel is suspected by the Government, and that he must return to Germany, and that as regards herself she would do well not to go to the towns near Coppet, because she would be looked upon as a foreigner, and in that way she might lose the chance of being able to go to Geneva. You see what an atrocious persecution it is, even down to the least things. About Schlegel it has been a horrible trouble to my mother; she appears to me to have quite made up her mind to leave. . . . Good heavens, how I am suffering, and how I love you! Come. I beseech you. I beg you on

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parently from the great crisis which had overwhelmed her, and during which she had lost her last hopes of happiness, Mme. Récamier now found herself once more placed in the extremely special conditions of existence in which we saw her before. Outside her friendships, she had not one of those simple and profound affections which satisfy the heart and give an aim to life. She was therefore playing lightly with what remained to her of affection in her vicinity. This is what has often been called her coquetry, and the word would be a right one if it did not suggest a certain hardness of heart, an intentional egoism which are contrary to Mme. Récamier's character. She continued receiving homages, counsel and confidences, as the letters we are about to quote will prove :

FROM MME. DE STAEL.

“28th of September, 1809.

“I did not write to you, dear friend, because, according to the Baron's calculations, I feared that my letter might remain at Chaumont and that I should have written for the inhabitants of that town, but I am sending to you in Paris my regrets and my affection. Adieu.

“I shall write to you,¹ too, more in detail to Paris, but I want to thank you, dear angelic beauty, for your kind and touching letter. The Baron gave us a detailed account of your adventures, and you can imagine whether it interested us. Why did you not come back with him? There is no fear of your arranging such pleasant surprises for us. The

my knees, to do this, you who are an angel from heaven.” Another undated letter is as follows: “But do tell me yourself what is this magic power you have over me? I love you hopelessly. I feel a sort of indignation for you. I should like, a thousand times over, not to care for you and all the time I feel that you alone are in my heart and that you will always be my first and only thought in the world.” Another undated letter is certainly of 1810, as Fosse's receptions are mentioned in it, and the post-mark proves that it has been through Blois. “I could only read your promises again and look at your hair. I was nearly furious, for I found a little letter from you to M. de B. But fortunately it was only rather kind. When you are there calling me Bartolo and making fun of my disagreeableness all is happiness. But absence makes everything seem bitter. . . . Oh, yes, Juliette, I am yours for this life and the next, what I have for you in my heart is sacred and unchangeable.”

¹ Written by Mathieu de Montmorency.

Baron reassured us with regard to your further journey. He put you into good hands near Camille Jordan, and it required nothing short of all his wisdom to allay my uneasiness? But I am even anxious as to what will become of you in Paris. Between Mme. de Marmont and Mme. de I scarcely know what will become of you, and my imagination needs to know everything positively as far as you are concerned. I love you even more than I adore you. You have even sanctified coquetry which, in you, seems to be no more than proselytism. Adieu, dear angel from heaven, do not fly away like a butterfly. We all vie with each other here in loving and regretting you.”¹

FROM MATHIEU DE MONTMORENCY.

“Montmirail, January 14th, 1810.²

“Do you know that I almost had the bold hope that you would perhaps write to me first, a few good, kind lines which would charm my solitude and console my troubles, and in order to produce more surely this double effect would give me good news of yourself, of the state of that mind, which when I left was undecided, irresolute, but always worthy of enjoying what is best. I hoped at least that if I did not get news direct there would be some arriving here in this *château* from which I might get a little benefit. It seems to me that during the first days I was here a man, whom with great tact of mind and heart you so promptly appreciated, told me that he had received a short letter, particularly kind as far as he was concerned, but which said very little about yourself, It is just yourself in whom all the friends you have in this part of the world are particularly interested. These friends pride themselves on having sentiments really profound which repulse all egoism and personality; they want, at any price and they would not hesitate to buy at any sacrifice possible, your real, lasting happiness, the only kind worthy of you, the only happiness which never ends and brings no repentance

¹ Unpublished letter in M. Ch. de Loménie's MSS. The post-mark is October 9th, 1809, and the letter comes from Geneva.

² The post-mark is January 16th, 1810.

with it. The impatient Sosthènes is inclined to be very uneasy about your silence ; he is afraid that you are ill or that you have given yourself up to some kind of diversions with which we should not be pleased. As for me, with my rights and my experience as your oldest friend, I am making less pronounced conjectures. I hope that if you were ill you would not be really unkind enough not to let us know, at any rate, through a third person. I put everything down in a certain degree to a laziness about writing which I know of old. But whilst trying to soothe, and to fight against, this impatience of a new friendship, I must confess that I am rather afraid of the daily effect of the futilities with which you are surrounded, which are not good for you and for which you are too good. When you have read nothing serious during your day and have scarcely found a few moments for reflection, and you then pass three or four hours of the evening in a certain atmosphere, contagious in its nature, you persuade yourself that your ideas are not settled, that you must begin again a self-examination which ought to have been made and finally established as a fixed basis that there could no longer be any question of disturbing. You discourage and alarm yourself. Ah, I beseech you, in the name of the deep interest which you do not doubt, in the name of my own sad and too personal experience, not to give way to this bad tendency. Take care not to recede or you will be inconsolable some day. And even that is not enough. You must go forward, not very quickly if you do not feel strong enough, but at least take a few steps forward. Have faith in the most affectionate wishes and at the same time in the wisest counsel. I hope you have not forgotten your promise to read something connected and serious for half an hour a day. These two conditions are indispensable, and also that of a few moments of prayer and meditation. Is this asking too much for the greatest interest in life, one might say, for the unique interest ? I hoped at first to be able to bring you my severe discourses myself, but I think my daughter will keep me here until the 24th, and I shall have time to get your answer here. I used the first part of my time in writing to tell my absent friends of my misfortune, as I have not had the consolation of

a few minutes' conversation with them such as I had with you, Camille, our friend, etc. Tell me what you know about the latter. You are never forgotten in all this, never by me, and I send you once more my most affectionate homage."¹

FROM MME. DE STAEL.

"January 14th, 1810.²

"You are a person who, in other times, would have been cited like the women of the century of Louis XIV, and your beauty has perhaps prevented people from discovering quickly enough all the rest. Your disposition and your mind are as much you as this dazzling beauty.

"Benjamin has written that he will be here on the 1st of February, and if he should fail, he says in his promise, it will be a breach of honour. I fancy he will come after spending a little time here. On my way to the boat I hope I shall be allowed to see you. I am sorry that I applied to M. de Champagny. A letter direct would have been better. I have hopes, sometimes rather mixed ones, that my work may serve me. Anyhow, I leave my fate in God's hands, but I must see you and have a long talk with you.³ It seems to me that I should get my soul penetrated with you as the Indians do with the sun, and this will remain for some time after I have left you.

"My son writes me hymns about you. It is a pity, dear friend, that we cannot be your. . . . (The word is partly gone through a tear in the paper.) We should all be this until death. Write to Baron de Vogt, he is complaining that he is forgotten. He is a man (the word here is illegible). For the degree that he loves it is a great deal. Adieu, my Juliette, I press you to my heart, which for the last three years has owed to you the only days it has been able to breathe."⁴

¹ Unpublished letter in M. Ch. de Loménié's MSS., No. 24 of the letters of M. de Montmorency. The address is Madame Juliette Récamier, Rue Basse-du-Rampart, Paris. ² This date is given by the post-mark.

³ The word here is very doubtful.

⁴ Unpublished letter from the original in M. Ch. de Loménié's possession. The letter was sent from Geneva and addressed to Madame J. Récamier, Rue Basse-du-Rampart de la Magdalaine, No. 32, Paris (No. 112 of the collection).

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FROM MATHIEU DE MONTMORENCY.

“I did not want to trouble you with a letter during just a few days of absence, and I hoped to go and spend a few hours this evening with you and decide together that it is possible to finish carnival, even *without a ball at the Opera*, and not lose one single enjoyment, but on the contrary find a few more in the depths of one’s heart and so feel more ready the following day for that ceremony of Ash Wednesday, which is so full of truly sublime ideas. It is Sosthènes, instead of me, who will have the privilege of finishing his carnival with you, and who will bring you these words which are really reasonable. . . . It seems to me that I always have many things to say to you and that my severity finds it very sweet to talk to you about the way of true happiness, in which I should so much like to see you walking with great strides. Give every preference, you are quite right, to this man who is eminently charming, and with whom you get on so well. But have faith in him, do as he advises, as he thinks right for your position. Adieu; if you have the courage to write me a few lines tell me about Prosper, about his present plans and say whether he is starting soon. I should be very sorry not to see him before his departure. I have promised to have another long conversation with him. It is not without a sort of fear that I see this decisive moment for our friend’s happiness arriving. I shall be very anxious about her from now until Easter, and about you too. I cannot give up hoping that this Easter time will be quite favourable and decisive for you. Again adieu. I trust that you have already finished the interesting manuscript and given it back to M. Hochet.”¹

FROM MME. DE STAEL.

“March 22nd.

“Tell me, my dear, why I have not a word from you. I wrote you a letter to which I expected an answer, and I was quite disappointed at your silence. I hope, though, that nothing is changed as regards your plans and that I shall see you in five or six weeks. But when you do not write to me for a

¹ Unpublished letter in M. Ch. de Loménie’s MSS. Address : Mme. Récamier. No. 25 of the collection of letters from M. de Montmorency.

long time I fancy that I have been robbed of the wealth of your friendship, for it is an unexpected happiness to me, and it has been put to the test by my situation. You cannot imagine how sad and suffering I am. Storms have risen within my soul of which I had no idea, as the time for my departure approaches, and I do not know what will become of me. Nevertheless, believe me, it is indispensable. The too delightful idea, about which I had let my heart have its own way, appears every day to be more and more impossible, and it seems to me that I should be very selfish to mingle my adversity with all the splendour of these festive days.

“ M. de Sabran has been very gracious with regard to the idea that came into my head, and he has done a great deal, so that I am very much touched, but my destiny has been arranged by fatality, and people might as well say to me as to Lusignan :

“ ‘ But to see Paris again I must no longer lay claim.’

Shall you not go out-doors a little during these fête days? I should like people to see you just once, and that you should throw everyone else into the shade, even if you do not show yourself again. How much you will have to tell me, dear friend! Have a good store, I beg you, of all that we shall like to talk about. It is true that I shall have nothing to give you in return except thanks without end, but I am used to that situation of affairs with you. My son will soon be going to Paris. He wants to be there for the fêtes, and so that he may have that pleasure I am persuading myself that it will be useful, but at bottom I do not believe anything of the kind. My book is advancing slowly because my health is not very good, and the least effort tires me. Let me have some news of you, such as one can give by letter. I am rather annoyed with you because you do not speak freely about anything in the present situation. It seems to me that you must know more than I do about everything. Adieu, dear Juliette, again I send you my love. Princess Louise has written giving me very kind regards from Prince Augustus, but nothing more.”¹

¹ Unpublished letter in M. Ch. de Loménié's MSS. Unaddressed.

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FROM THE SAME.

“LYONS, 16th of April [1810].

“I am here in the same room in which I saw you ten months ago, dear friend. Since then you have cared for me still more than you did then, and now it seems to me that you have forgotten me. Just think that I cannot be happy unless it is through you at present. As soon as I am settled at Chaumont I shall write to ask you to come and see me, and I feel very much inclined to spend the summer there. If I succeeded in getting you to stay with me I should not want to leave until July, and so get three months with one I love. That is a great deal. *Write to me at Blois, dép [artement] of Loir-et-Cher*, so that I may know when I shall see you. I am going to meet Prosper, and Mathieu is coming on the 2nd of May. Do make arrangements for a long stay. It would be so sweet to spend the summer with you and, although that must make the last moment more bitter, I am ready to meet the sorrow if I may enjoy the days of happiness. Adieu, dear friend, a thousand times dear. You will not disappoint me in my plans for this summer, will you? Camille sends you a thousand kind messages and is as uneasy as I am about what is going on in your heart.”¹

FROM THE SAME.

“April 27th [1810].

“DEAR JULIETTE,—My heart beats with pleasure at the thought of seeing you. Try to arrange to give me as much time as you can, for I shall stay here three months, and have enough to talk to you about for three years. I invite any of your friends or mine who do not fear solitude and exile. I wish that some chance might bring M. Lemontey this way; I should give him my book to read. Would not Talma be free to give us a few days? I want you to be happy here, but if I find again what made me so happy at Coppet I hope you will not be bored. Will you tell M. Adrien that I venture to flatter myself that I shall see him, and that I count on you and Mathieu for seconding me in this wish. You must come

¹ Unpublished letter in M. Ch. de Loménie's MSS. No address nor date.

to *Écure* (*dép. of Loir-et-Cher*) three leagues farther than Blois. That is my address, too, for letters, and from there a little boat will bring you to the *château* of Catherine de Medicis, who did more harm than you. Tell me the time so that I may meet you. You must reckon from sixteen to seventeen hours' journey as far as there, and the best thing, perhaps, would be to sleep at Orleans, and then arrive here for dinner. That would tire you less. My dearest love.”¹

Mme. Récamier went to take the waters at Aix-en-Savoie in 1810,² and then joined Mme. de Staél, who, in order to supervise the editing of her three volumes on Germany, had taken up her abode at the Château of Chaumont-sur-Loire, near Blois. Juliette took this journey in a carriage lent her by the Comte de Nesselrode.³

On the way from Aix towards Touraine, Juliette stayed a few days at Bugey to pay a visit to one of her sisters-in-law. It was there, in the domains of Cressin, that she saw one of her husband's nieces, whose ways she liked. She decided to adopt this girl, Mlle. Cyvoct, who lost her mother a few months later, and went to Mme. Récamier in August,⁴ 1811. Amélie Cyvoct was destined from thenceforth to be the devoted and constant companion of an aunt whom she loved like a mother. By this adoption Mme. Récamier hoped to “delight the old age of her husband.” “What I believed I was doing for him,” she wrote towards the close of her life, “I have done for myself.”⁵

Sophie de Barante, the future Mme. Anison, had the privilege of seeing the Coppet society reconstituted at Chaumont-sur-Loire. She stayed there five or six days with Mathieu de Montmorency, M. de Sabran, and Mme. Récamier, whom she remembered most vividly.⁶ After

¹ Letter without address in M. Ch. de Loménie's MSS., published almost entirely in *Souv. et Corr.*, I, pp. 153 and 154.

² *Mme. Récamier et les amis de sa jeunesse*, p. 58.

³ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 153 and following. Chateaubriand, *M.O.T.* IV, pp. 415 and 416.

⁴ Or in July. Mme. Lenormant gives a different date.

⁵ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 166 and following. *Mme. Récamier et les amis de sa jeunesse*, p. 160 and following. Monfalcon IV, p. 125.

⁶ About this sojourn at Chaumont we have another witness, just as valuable, in Adelbert de Chamisso de Boncourt. Chamisso had left Berlin for

describing the Château itself, so picturesque with its view over the Loire and the chestnut-trees of its avenues, she tells in her *Souvenirs* all that she remembers of her visit. "The house," she says, "was full of intrigues, for Mme. Récamier was carrying on quietly several innocent flirtations which entertained and occupied everyone. Auguste de Staél, too, was then passionately in love with her. M. de Montmorency was piously caught in the toils of her conquering charms, and was occupied for long hours together admonishing her and making her a trifle devout. Mme. de Staél, whilst laughing at her little faults, fondled and loved her, for at bottom she was a person very devoted to her friends and of fascinating sweetness. Everyone knew, too, that these little flirtations made up a necessary part of her existence, so that all who presented themselves to her had their share in them. . . . News and visits from Paris kept arriving all the time."¹

At Chaumont-sur-Loire, as everywhere else, Mme. Récamier received advice from Mathieu. On the 5th of June, 1810, he wrote to her from Paris :

"I am going to write you a few words direct, sweet Juliette. I fear that the letter I wrote yesterday to our friend, and which necessarily contains much for you, may have to wait for her a few days during her little journey, and I should not like those that you spend in a peaceful retreat with the children of your meditations not to bring you some memory of him who thinks of you often, and who has acquired one more title with you of which he is very proud. You will be very much astonished at the news you will find in to-day's paper,² and that we have known since yesterday. I scarcely trouble about any news except that which concerns

Paris. He had requested to be employed in the Educational Department, but as this had not succeeded he consoled himself by working in the Public Libraries. Schlegel took Adelbert to Mme. de Staél's, who was settling at Chaumont-sur-Loire. Chamisso therefore saw Mathieu de Montmorency, Sabran, the Russian, Boelck, and "the beautiful, the agreeable Récamier." Chamisso's account in his letter of August 1st, 1810, to Guillaume Neumann is very full of life. In a few words he describes each of the guests. *Oeuvres*, edit., Hitzig. V, p. 266. Compare pp. 264 and 265.

¹ In *De Broglie. Histoire et Politique*, p. 277 and following.

² On the 3rd June, Fouché was replaced at the Ministry of Police by Savary. It was a very annoying event for the proscribed and suspected persons. P. Gautier, *Mme. de Staél et Napoléon*, p. 242 and following.

our family affairs and interests, but I thought about our friend on hearing this, although I hope it may not affect her. Still one cannot help feeling some uneasiness. My cousin went yesterday to take my sister-in-law the formal invitation to return to one of her former habitations. He was sad and so are we all. Shall you not sympathize in our sorrow, since your sweet kindness always makes you share the impressions of your friends ?

" I hope that the old house, now still more solitary, does not make you unhappy, that you have adopted a very simple manner with the children who are no longer children, that you find the admirable order of your mornings suits you, and that hour devoted to great thoughts under the beautiful shadow of the trees. My heart and my thoughts will be with you more than once whilst awaiting the time when I may join you there. Sosthènes, and a friend of his who is very sincerely your friend, asked me with great interest for news of you. I told them that there was good news. Do not make me say what is not true. I hope very much that the news may be good in every way, and that I may hear you are quite better after the suffering which I know was only temporary. The return of this always affects your friends and gives them the right to ask you to take care of yourself and to be reasonable.

" You will write me a few lines, will you not, and will you put in now and again one or two kind words for our good African god-son, whom it is our strict duty to encourage in the path of virtue ? Let us pray for him. That would be another thought that we should have in common. Let us pray for each other and for our poor friend. There is nothing like prayer for elevating the mind and consoling the heart. Let us learn to know better and to serve better this Divine Master day by day, this friend *par excellence* Who alone has nothing incomplete. We can have no regret for all that we do for Him. I have seen Année and, although tired, suffering, wretched about the separation, she is always kind and distinguished. We talked a great deal about you and about her husband, who for his part is very sad. But I do not allow myself to talk to her about the country she is

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leaving, as we cannot agree about it. Mme. de Cattelan has just written to me for news of you. She says she has received none. How do you make that agree with your continual writing? I will answer her or try to call upon her. Adieu, thousands and thousands of affectionate homages."¹

The life of the guests of Chaumont was never as agitated as it had been during their visit to Coppet in 1807. It was not free though from intrigues nor even from storms. Auguste de Stael's love for her was a fresh cause for the fears and scruples of Mme. Récamier. She could not respond to it without incurring the displeasure of Mme. de Stael, to whom her son was more than ever necessary. The following letter from Mathieu de Montmorency, although rather obscure, seems to allude to this situation.

“PARIS, *Monday evening,*
“*June 18th.*²

“The sadness of your whole letter touched me deeply. I have several times wanted to reply, but I felt that I needed to have two or three friendly conversations with you and that a letter would not suffice at all. Your delicacy, your generosity even imposes upon me a secret which I shall respect, but which embarrasses me in writing to you. Let me submit to you one single reflection which I do not think is too severe and which you ought often to make even with regard to the past, namely, that it is a very bad system of conduct and of happiness which can cause the friendship of a heart so worthy and capable of experiencing all kind sentiments to be considered blameworthy even in appearance. Give up, my sweet friend, give up for ever this unfortunate error which only does harm to yourself and to others. I should say much more if I did not know that you have suffered and are still suffering. This idea absorbs many others as far as I am concerned. Without entering into any detail with Auguste, I found out from him exactly what your

¹ Unpublished letter in M. Ch. de Loménie's MSS. No. 28 of the collection of letters from M. de Montmorency. Address: Madame Récamier, Chaumont-sur-Loire, *vid Eure*, Dept. of Loire et Cher.

² This unpublished letter bears no indication of the year in which it was written, but it is addressed to Chaumont, which gives it the date of 1810. M. Ch. de Loménie's MSS. Letters from M. de Montmorency, No. 29.

state then was, and it appears that it was rather more calm. I asked too about the house in general, and I hope to hear no reciprocal reproaches when I come.

“Let me know in a short letter, truly and exactly, when you think of leaving this antique Château where I absolutely must see you again. I will try and make my arrangements accordingly. There are some things that I must attend to, though, in order to be more free at the end of the month, so that I have little hope of being able to come before the 12th. Once more I send you all affectionate homage. I hope you will say a few words of kindness and encouragement from time to time to our god-son. I shall always like him for the extra bond between us for which he is responsible.”¹

Mme. Récamier went occasionally to Paris, and then returned to Mme. de Staél.² The latter had quite decided about going to America, and so had gathered all her friends around her for the last time. On returning from one of these rapid journeys, Mme. Récamier wrote as follows to Mme. Degérando :

“CHAUMONT-SUR-LOIRE, July 17th, 1810.

“In spite of the certitude of having no reply I want to write to you, dear Annette, for I want to tell you how happy I was to see you again. If I had not had a friend in exile I could not have made up my mind to leave you so quickly, and to leave you just at a time when I shall be so impatient to hear news of you. I am very sad, and I really need to have a few moments with you and to talk to you from my very heart. You are the woman I should like to resemble. I love that sweet melancholy in you, which proves that you cannot see all the reasons you have to be satisfied with yourself. It seems to me that if I had all your qualities I should have great difficulty in preventing myself from being vain, and I should not be much like you if I were not modest.

“Adieu, dear. You ought to write on a sheet of paper

¹ See also the letter of July 2nd, 1810, No. 30 of the collection, most of which is published in *Souv. et Corr.*, I, pp. 51 and 52.

² According to an unpublished letter from Baron de Vogt to Degérando, dated July 28th, 1810. Boubée collection, Lyons.

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just four words, just three even, *I love you*, and this souvenir of you would do me good.

"They are very much taken up here with German metaphysics, and when they were talking of the ideal, Benjamin Constant said : 'For a Frenchman the *real* is money, the *ideal* vanity.' I am repeating this for you as it was so smart, but, thank Heaven, I believe that in France there are as many good and noble sentiments as in any place on earth."¹

Benjamin Constant had also arrived at Chaumont. Mme. de Staél still felt the need of seeing him, no matter what her fresh intrigues were. As far as he was concerned, though, if we are to believe him, he was more and more oblivious of the friend whom he had caused to suffer so much. In his letter to the Comtesse de Nassau, he only spoke of the happiness which his wife's affection gave him. "We have not," he dares to declare, "since we have been living together had one difference of sentiment, will or impression, and I have not, on one single occasion, great or small, seen the goodness, the sweetness and the affection of my wife obscured by the smallest cloud."²

Mme. de Staél was, undoubtedly, greatly distressed by the attitude Benjamin had taken. But as a matter of fact, as we already pointed out at the time of the celebrated rupture, her heart and her thoughts were now entirely with Prosper de Barante. She would willingly have offered him all that remained of her future, as her letter to Juliette on the 14th of January, 1810, proves. This accounts no doubt for the desire Mathieu de Montmorency had to get, as he says, "a long conversation" with Prosper de Barante, and this was perhaps, too, what Mme. de Staél meant by her complaints in her letter of March 22nd, when she reproaches her friend with hiding from her all that she ought to know about the "present situation." In April the banished woman was rejoicing that she would soon be able to see Prosper and

¹ *Lettres de Mme. de Staél et de Mme. Récamier*, published by Degérando, pp. 15 and 16.

² Public Library of Geneva, Mec. No. 36. Published by Menos, work quoted, pp. 409 and 410. This letter was written on the 8th of August, 1810.

Mathieu again. Mathieu was the faithful friend, the counsellor whose advice was not much heeded, but who was esteemed. As to Prosper, all that she felt for him is expressed in this phrase of deep tenderness with which she ends one of her letters to Mme. Récamier (April 27th): "Prosper leaves the day after to-morrow. I look upon him as a wild fancy which colours my life."

The letters of Prosper de Barante, which are always so interesting, supply us this time with valuable indications with regard to his sentiments.

In August, 1810, he writes to Mme. Récamier from Chaumont:

"I have been here since yesterday, and it is all better than I expected. The weather is fine; I like the house and the country round. These circumstances, apparently trifling, act upon me. Mme. de St . . . is gentle. There are no storms. No question of the future is discussed, and even the date of my departure does not cause any difficulties. All this makes me feel grateful. I am sorry that Mme. de St . . . should have to force herself in order to arrive at this. Perhaps, though, she really has to do this less than she imagines. She praises my character, my generosity, a thousand times over, and that embarrasses and humiliates me. I deserve a little of all this, but not all, you know. You will be questioned very closely about my stay in Paris. I have not said one untrue thing. It is embarrassing, though, that she should not know just what is true, perhaps alas, what was true; I shall have no letter from you for four days, and the last was a very bad one. I am no good to anyone except just as society; I cannot do anyone any good that really counts. . . ."

And on the 8th of December of the same year, he speaks again of the strange situation in which he finds himself, loving Mme. Récamier and beloved by Mme. de Staél.¹ "I know all that there is in you charming, noble, and good. For an instant, I fancied that I could enjoy all this more than anyone else. You quickly showed me my mistake. . . ."

He explains frankly to Mme. Récamier his sentiments for Mme. de Staél:—

¹ Post-mark, December 18th, 1810.

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"I cannot and ought not to give my life to a person whom I could not make happy, and who so well deserves to be happy. I will also own to you that at no time has it seemed more difficult to concentrate on one single point, on one unique sentiment, Mme. de Stael's mind, which is so active and so variable. She has never had so great a need of diversion, and has never given herself up so thoroughly to it."

These fragments of letters, and there are many others that one could take from those of the collection which Juliette saved, do not allow, it would seem, of any possible discussion with regard to this intrigue which several times over almost caused discord between the two friends. Prosper de Barante regretted very much that Mme. de Stael should offer and exact from him more than friendship. With a great deal of perspicacity, and of what seemed like probability, he shows the part there was in Mme. de Stael's demonstrations which was due to imagination and chronic excitement. What it concerns us to note is that Juliette once more had not been wanting in delicacy, for when she was begged to allow Prosper de Barante a favoured situation she "teaches him his mistake," and, according to Sainte-Beuve's happy expression, stopped this fresh passion "in April." Besides this, warned by more than one experience, Mme. Récamier increased her precautions. The coquetry with which Sophie de Barante mildly reproaches her was employed as much in cooling down passions as in provoking them, and her severe guardian himself, when acquainted with the details of what was going on at Chaumont, complimented her.

Mathieu de Montmorency was very anxious to join Mme. de Stael as early as possible. "I should like it to be," he writes from Paris on the 24th of August, "at least two or three days before the departure fixed by our beautiful friend, who will certainly grant me an extra one. Let me commend her at once, and with all my heart, for her profound wisdom in the choice of her abode, a wisdom which is all the more meritorious, since she has had to battle with your inconsistencies; forgive me for the word, my dear friend. The consequences of them grieve you, but you never miss doing

what will lead to them when the opportunity presents itself.”¹

The wise Mathieu adds : “I am very much taken up with the book, and with the ending that you must write carefully and even hurry with, but without tiring yourself. These continued delays may have the inconvenience of causing too much talk, and one never knows what may happen. I have not heard of anyone who has read it. . . . I do not want to scold you about your gloomy thoughts with regard to a change of residence, for you say such pleasant things to me. But I am rather angry about what is the real cause of these thoughts much more than the places. I mean the need of a couple of hours of excited and romantic conversation, without any aim or positive sentiment, at any rate, on your part. Ah, my poor friend !”²

The completion of the book *De l'Allemagne* was, in the midst of all these little intrigues about which Mathieu was uneasy, the great preoccupation of Mme. de Staél. At the Château of Chaumont-sur-Loire she was accepting the hospitality of a certain M. Leray.³ When M. Leray returned from America the little colony was obliged to move to M. de Salaberry’s at Fossé. The book *Dix Années d'exil* has made this place celebrated, as Mme. de Staél spent there the last weeks she still had to stay in France. They all played at post and, according to a charming remark which the banished woman made to her friend during this game, Juliette was “the sweet and tranquil centre” of this home. “I know,” added Mme. de Staél, “that certain sentiments seem to be more necessary to me, but I know, too, that everything crumbles away when you leave.”⁴

At the beginning of September Juliette was still at Fossé, for Mathieu wrote to her on the 7th as follows :—

¹ Letter addressed to Mme. de Staél, in care of her maid, at the end of the letters from M. de Montmorency to Mme. Récamier in M. Ch. de Loménie’s collection.

² On the 7th of September, M. de Montmorency is still in Paris. Letter No. 31 of the collection.

³ See *Sovr. et Corr.*, I, p. 154 and following, and Rondelet, *Éloge de Mme. R.*, p. 123. Compare P. Gautier, *Mme. de Staél et Napoléon*, p. 243.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

"How rich the post was for me yesterday in kind letters from Blois! There was one from you, which gave me great pleasure. Your silence alarmed me, and still more so when I heard from Montmirail that they were complaining of it too. I fancy that I may understand there has been a renewal with which I should not be pleased. But how am I to scold when I owe all that I know to the kindest confidence on your part, and when I am soon to see you again. I shall reserve all my severities for the conversations in which all can be gone into more fully. At present I am in the midst of the worries of departure, which is always a terrible and hurried time with me. I have not even a moment to reply to Auguste, from whom I received a very kind letter also yesterday. I shall answer him by word of mouth. The great impression that the reading you have just finished has made upon you, proves to me how well prepared your soul is at bottom. Yes, God wants it at all costs, there is no way of refusing Him. Good-bye, sweet friend, how glad I shall be to be at Fossé on Wednesday, or at latest on Thursday. There will be no regret except that you are leaving too soon, but we can talk a great deal first."¹

Mme. Récamier had to leave Fossé towards the end of September, as she was charged with an important mission. It was to obtain the approval of the censor for the third volume of the book on Germany, the two first ones having passed the censors. For this service Mme. de Staél could not count on Degérando, with whom just then she was on rather delicate terms. Corinne had been very much hurt at Degérando's behaviour because, when he was appointed member of the Council for the Roman States, he had neglected calling to see her on his way to Rome. On the 14th of September, 1810, she wrote to Degérando: "I have too much esteem for your character and your life as a whole to allow myself to judge what I do not understand, and if circumstances change you will find me again what I was. It is quite impossible for me not to admire your mind and not to believe in the kindness of your heart, but I am distressed

¹ Unpublished letter, No. 31 of the collection of letters from M. de Montmorency. M. Ch. de Loménie's MSS.

at the circumstances which have flung a veil over a friendship which I believed to be unchangeable."¹

It was Juliette, therefore, who was commissioned to obtain the signature of the censor.² Mme. de Staél awaited the result of these proceedings at an estate belonging to Mathieu at Forest, near Blois. The result is well known.³ The police had the edition of *L'Allemagne* destroyed and the Duc de Rovigo gave Mme. de Staél orders to start back to Coppet without delay. Mme. Récamier had tried in vain to soften Esménard, the censor of the book-trade and Chief of the 3rd Division of the Police General. She only obtained from him a pretentious letter, in which very clumsy allusions to Mme. de Staél's book were mixed with compliments in the worst possible taste. Napoleon's animosity towards the exiled woman was too thorough and of too old standing for it to yield to the persuasion, tactful though it might be, of a woman who was looked upon with great suspicion, and personally compromised.

"Mme. Récamier," writes Ballanche,⁴ "had just left the Château of Chaumont perfectly intoxicated with the hopes that Mme. de Staél had of the success of her attempts. How was it possible really to think that Bonaparte was about to deprive the country gratuitously of one of its glories, and a glory so perfectly inoffensive to his own? It was not to be like this, though, and immediately after Mme. Récamier's departure Mme. de Staél received, for sole reply, a letter from the Duc de Rovigo, which announced both the suppression of her book and a fresh order of exile which did not allow her to leave Coppet. . . . Anyhow tyranny did not succeed in doing away with the book on Germany. Some proofs were taken away in spite of the vigilance of the police, and these proofs served later on, under the auspices of the Restoration, as a proof of the inconceivable absurdity of a power endeavouring to conquer thought. The phœnix was to rise again from its ashes."⁵

¹ *Lettres . . .* published by Degérando, pp. 75-76.

² See *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 158 and following.

³ See the details of this affair in P. Gautier, the work quoted, p. 244 and following.

⁴ Unpublished *Biographie*, pp. 84 and 85.

⁵ The Duchesse de Raguse wrote from Laybach, on the 5th of November,

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On the 30th of September, Mme. de Staél wrote to Mme. Récamier from Fossé :

“ Dear friend, I have fallen into a state of frightful sadness. The departure¹ has taken possession of my soul and for the first time I felt all the grief of what I thought would be easy. I was counting on the effect of my book for keeping me up. There are six years of work, study and travelling as good as lost, and only imagine the strangeness of this affair ; the two first volumes which had already been passed by the censor were the ones that were seized, and M. Portalis² did not know any more than I did about this matter. And so I am sent forty leagues away because I have written a book which was approved by the Emp.[eror]’s censors. That is not all, for I might have had my book printed in Germany, but of my own free will I submitted it to the censorship here. The worst that could happen was that my book should be prohibited, how can they punish me for coming voluntarily to submit myself to the judges ? Well, I should never finish, my dear friend, if I were to discuss this subject, but I am like Werther, my self-esteem and my heart are both wounded, and that is a very painful situation, as one is annoyed with one’s self for having anything else but one’s sentiments. Mathieu is here, my dear, the friend of twenty years’ standing, the most perfect being that I know, and I must leave him. You, dear angel, who have loved me on account of my misfortunes, and only known me in the time of my adversity, you have made life sweet for me, and I must leave you too. Ah, God, I am the Orestes of exile, and fatality pursues me. Well, the will of God must be done, I hope that He will sustain me. For the last time I hear that music of Pertosa’s³ which reminds me of your sweet face and of your charm, which is not even dependent on your beauty, of so many pure, serene days

1810, to Mme. Récamier : “ This story about Mme. de S. which you tell me, amazes me. I pity her sincerely. There is nothing for her to hope for after such a decision. But tell me, Madame, has she at any rate kept the manuscript of the work, which I am curious to read ? I hope so. Did you read it when finished ? What was it like ? ”

¹ Probably despair.

² The director of the book trade, who had a rather lively incident with Rovigo about this matter. P. Gautier, work quoted, p. 246.

³ Albertine de Staél’s professor of music.

this summer, and of so many stormy days which from henceforth I shall look back to as the most beautiful ones of my life. I am sure that you will prompt Auguste to do what is best, but I have no hope. I shall see you once more and press you to my heart and then the unknown future will commence. Forgive me, dear friend, for writing you such a doleful letter. I will be more courageous, but to die in this way, as far as all one's souvenirs and all one's sentiments are concerned, is a horrible effort. . . . I am tempted to say to you as M. Du Breuil did to Péméja.¹ ‘My friend, there only ought to be you here.’ If you know anything tell me. I sent a courier to Prosper to ask him whether he wanted to see me or not at Saumur, and I shall await his reply at Mme. Trinflard's (?) at Écure. When I get it I will send Eugène to Paris to tell you what I do. My angel, tell M. de Sabran that I will write to him to-morrow. With fond love.”²

Mathieu de Montmorency, whilst thanking Juliette, was anxious to know what was happening with regard to her intercourse with Auguste de Stael.

“FOSSE, NEAR BLOIS, October 2nd, 1810.

“I cannot refuse myself the pleasure of writing at least a few words to you, sweet and perfect friend. Our first thought, common of course to all your friends here, was solely about your health, to which in your absolute devotion you pay so little attention, and about your suffering on the way from Angervilliers to Paris. I was deeply grieved about it. I hope you have felt no more of all this and that you are well again, as well as you can be at such a time. Our friend has just received, through Albert, your letter which is so perfect, so devoted, and in which you give such details. I have no need to tell you all the sentiments it awakened in us; one only reigns at this moment within me, and that is to feel how much generosity and devotion you have in your soul. She was deeply touched and will certainly tell you so when

¹ Ballanche copies it Pahméja.

² Text of the autograph letter in M. Ch. de Loménie's MSS., No. 130. A great part of it is published in *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 163 and following. Copied by Ballanche, work quoted, pp. 85, 86, 87, 88.

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her son returns. I wanted to come instead of him and arrive to-morrow, but it appears she wishes absolutely that I should stay two days more. It will be Saturday evening, then, at the latest, when I shall see you. Until then my thoughts and feelings are with you. Do not let such kind acts of devotion prevent you from striving yourself. May they on the contrary lead you to the source of all that is good and elevated. If I am to think aloud with you I will tell you that in the depths, the very depths of my soul, there is, in spite of myself, a faint dread, a faint jealousy about all that in your sentiments might concern the son more than the mother, but in such moments I must silence all this and think and feel with you, and pray God with all my heart for you and for her. Adieu, sweet friend.”¹

On the 2nd of October, 1810, Mathieu de Montmorency wrote again from “Fossé, near Blois,” to Mme. Récamier :

“This morning I sent you a short letter by post, sweet friend. M. de la Porte has just arrived, and he brings us several from you. Your silence would have troubled me, but our common sentiment and occupation keeps coming back to my mind. Our friend, who is very busy with her letters for Albert’s return, as he starts to-night by the coach, asks us to begin a letter to which she will add a few words. I fancy that every one, friends and acquaintances, will be satisfied with the one sent to you. You must now do the very best you can with it by means of the obliging ex-Queen,² and try first to obtain a rendezvous, as our friend attaches the greatest importance to this, and it might really help to change her lot.

“Whilst the result of the petition is being awaited, Auguste will perhaps be able to obtain a prolongation of the delay accorded in some town forty leagues away, in order to await the final verdict of the censorship, and you will be as nice as possible to Esménard, so that this shall be as prompt and as reasonable as possible.

¹ M. Ch. de Loménie’s papers. No. 33 of M. de Montmorency’s letters. A great part of this letter is published in *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 159 and following.

² Queen Hortense.

"This is my idea, at any rate, for the campaign of friendship, in which, on Saturday without fault, I shall be with you to serve as aide-de-camp, and about which our friend will write to her son her latest plan and her precise intentions.

"M. de la Porte tells me that Sosthènes was with you yesterday morning. I imagine that it was specially on your account that he returned from Dampierre, very much disappointed at not finding you at Angerville. Give him a hundred kind messages if you see him again before I do. I shall wait for our conversations in order to make all my observations about the curious details of your letter, in which you proved yourself a perfect friend in the way of correspondence. I shall not repeat what I said this morning about all your perfections in trouble and devotion. I recognize in all this your heart, all that I know of you, all which makes you worthy of the noble and pure affections for which you are certainly destined. Adieu, and a thousand loving homages. Saturday evening then, at the latest. I wrote to Adrien, too, this morning. I think Auguste has behaved very well. As a son and *as a ward* I think there is nothing wanting in him, and I send him a thousand affectionate compliments. Remember me, too, to M. de Sabran, who is also very much attached and very devoted I am sure."

Mme. de Staél adds in a postscript:—

"Dear friend, there are no words in which to tell you what I feel as regards your tenderness for me. It is a fearful misfortune to have to leave you. I am going to Saumur, and shall be back at Tours on Tuesday. There I shall see Auguste, and he will then go back to fetch you and bring you to me, that I may press you to my heart. I impress upon Auguste not to tell a word of what is said to him, particularly by the Duc de Rovigo. My dear, dear friend; what a fate! How much I have to say to you!"¹

¹ Letters which have been partially published. MSS. of Mme. de Staél's letters in M. Ch. de Loménié's collection, No. 125. See *Souv. et Corr. de Mme. R.*, I, p. 160 and following.

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On Friday, the 5th of October, there is another letter from Mme. de Staël, still more heartrending.¹

" Dear friend, I leave Mathieu this evening and start tomorrow, having no other shelter than an inn. May God protect me, dear friend ! I am alone and, until Wednesday, without a friend even. I shall have some heartrending farewells to say at Saumur. Everything is so cruel, but no doubt I have either deserved it or else I deserve something better.² I should like you, my angel of goodness, to let M. Schlegel see Lemontey, He will come to see you with M. de Balk, so that he may take him to 'Esménard. I am frightened to death lest they should let my book appear with alterations that I have not seen, that they should change it and put I know not what, and M. Schlegel is better able than anyone to speak on that subject. Dear friend, your generous friendship for me has only brought trouble to you. At any rate, you will have noble memories and my eternal affection to make up to you, perhaps, a little for all this. We shall meet, God helping us, in one way or another on Monday, October 15th. I have divided my farewells and my meetings in two in order not to attract attention. Say that I am on my way to Nantes, but that I am travelling slowly, awaiting my various replies. Our mutual stay, Mathieu, will tell you everything about me, but no one can express to you all that I feel for you. Adieu, my angel ; alas, adieu ! A letter has reached me from the Duc de Rovigo, Mathieu will bring you a copy of it and my reply. I hope to see you whether I start for Morlaix or for Coppet. Ah, dear friend, what a fate ! Ask M. de Sabran to forgive me if my trouble prevents me from writing. Write to me, dear angel, before post time on Sunday, care of M. de Chamisso, Poste Restante, Tours (Indre-et-Loire)."³

Auguste de Staël was all the time in love with Mme. Récamier, but, as his mother wrote, he loved her "seriously

¹ On the 3rd of October, 1810, the Duc de Rovigo had written to Mme. de Staël telling her that a delay of seven or eight days was accorded her. Preface to *L'Allemagne*, October 1st, 1815.

² Text doubtful.

³ Text like the original, No. 132 of the manuscript letters from Mme. de Staël in M. Ch. de Loménié's collection. Published in part in *Coppet et Weimar*, pp. 172 and 173. Copied by Ballanche in work quoted, pp. 88-89.

and chivalrously," and Mme. de Staél would not say anything against an affection that she shared so thoroughly. She lingered along the road because it hurt her to leave France, and because Switzerland seemed like "a prison" to her. It was to Mme. Récamier again that she applied with regard to the steps to be taken for her book on Germany. "I recommend my poor book to your kindness," she writes, "would it not be better for it to appear with certain changes which I should look over rather than come out in Germany, and that cannot fail to result as the bookseller has already sent a few copies there?"¹ The situation was a bad one for Mme. de Staél and her friends. It was worse still upon the discharge of M. de Barante, the father of Prosper, who, whether far or near, had protected by his sympathy the guests of the Château of Coppet. M. de Barante had been installed on the 16th of January, 1803, as Prefect of the Department of Leman. Baron Capelle was appointed in his stead on the 30th of November, 1810.²

Mme. Anisson Duperron, the sister of the historian, De Barante, who lived when young in the midst of the Coppet society, wrote down in a note-book her opinions and her souvenirs, extracts from which have been published by the Duc de Broglie.³ It is from her that we hear how her father, when appointed Prefect of Geneva, refused to persecute the celebrated exile. "Madame de Staél wanted to be able to come freely when she pleased to Geneva, which was then situated in France. My father sent her word that he saw nothing to prevent it, *that he should not give any account about it*, and that she would be free in all her intercourse, and could come as much as she liked to Geneva and its suburbs."⁴ Mme. Anisson tells us fully about the causes of her father's discharge. During the whole of one winter Mme. de Staél had rented a flat next the Prefecture, and Albertine de Staél and Sophie de Barante met several times a day.⁵ Prosper took part with Labédoyère, Constant, and Sismondi in the

¹ Letter of October 12th, 1810, in M. Ch. de Loménie's MSS.

² We owe these dates to the kindness of M. Eugène Ritter, Professor at the Faculty of Geneva. About Capelle, see Gautier, work quoted p. 284 and following.

³ *Histoire et politique*, p. 257 and following.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 264 and 265. ⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 267.

performances that Mme. de Staél organized.¹ This was already a great imprudence, but there was a still greater. Prosper, in his quality of auditor to the State Council, had accompanied the Emperor during the Eylau campaign, and he made the mistake, in one of his letters to his family, of giving it as his opinion that the expedition was an unfortunate one. The correspondence was read by the police, and the auditor was sent as sub-Prefect to Bressuire, Vendée. M. de Barante, the father, was recalled, and he retired to his estate. "He was greatly appreciated in Geneva," says Mme. Anisson, "he had succeeded in softening down a certain hostility against France which nationality and religion were keeping up in the people's hearts."² It was to Mme. Récamier that Mathieu de Montmorency applied for details about this fresh incident.

"Tuesday, 1 o'clock in the morning."

"Your presence is always missed, sweet friend, but I have missed it still more the last two days since learning from the papers that M. de Barante's father is recalled, without the reason being given or known. I should like to have talked to you about it and to have heard something about it from you, or to have met his son at your house as I do not know his address. I must give up all that and ask you merely to let me have a few words as to the details, in case you are back and know all about it. I am leaving in a few hours for a place where you have some true friends who will often talk about you, and think of you still more often. Think about them in order to abridge and simplify a certain correspondence. Adieu, I shall await your first letter with impatience. Our friend will be crushed by this news."³

The following letter from Mathieu, rather obscure in its details, evidently alludes to the intercourse between Auguste de Staél and Mme. Récamier.

*"MONTMIRAIL, Tuesday evening,
December 18th [1810]."*⁴

"I wanted to reply by last post, sweet friend, to your little letter, which gave me pleasure because it was from you, and

¹ *Histoire et politique*, p. 268.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 272-273.

³ Unpublished letter. Address: Mme. Récamier, Rue Basse-du-Rampart, Paris. No. 40 of the letters from M. de Montmorency. M. Ch. de Loménie's MSS.

⁴ The post-mark is December 21st, 1810.

pain because of the sad things it told me. I am tempted to think they are exaggerated, and anyhow I do not know whether the one who told you should not be suspected of an exaggeration that is rather habitual to him on this subject, both in order to make himself more important and at the same time to alarm you, if possible, about a friendship which he does not care for your having. But anyhow it suffices that these wretched things should be believed by some, and repeated by a still greater number, for them to be very painful for us and very likely to affect our friend greatly. I am glad that you have not left me the cruel task of telling her, and that you decided finally to let her son know. Must it not be very serious for me to approve of this, as I am not at all reconciled to this correspondence? You were seven or eight days without writing! My friendship pays you a tribute of affection and of satisfaction for each of the eight days. Continue the same system a few times. I am sure it is better for your happiness and your reason than more punctuality. Are you quite sure that it was not the wish to break this silence that made you write about his mother's interests? She will know all, for it is their way to have few secrets from each other. I fear the effect it will have on her. In her last letter she did not appear to have any idea of it. She only foresaw the regret of giving up the voyage of this winter, and she counted on the son going to say farewell to her. That same letter contained this phrase, which gives me pleasure to copy for you. '*The beautiful friend has written me a charming letter.*' That happens sometimes with you, and always when you pour out your heart in pure friendship, truly worthy of you."¹

In the midst of her travelling and her various agitations, Mme. de Staél fancied that M. de Barante's recall was not at all on her account. She reproached her friend, too, for influencing Prosper and persuading him to break off all correspondence with Coppet.² In spite of all things it was more and more painful to her, she wrote, to feel that she was treated like anyone plague-stricken.³ She was only "subduing her heart" in the hope of arriving some day "at the

¹ Unpublished letter in M. Ch. de Loménié's collection. Letters from M. de Montmorency, No. 38.

² Letter No. 136 of M. Ch. de Loménié's collection. Copy. ³ *Ibid.*

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great goal of glory."¹ She was very much taken up with a fresh sentiment. There was a young man of twenty-three, "as handsome as possible,"² who had to walk with crutches on account of five shots he had received when in the army. Mme. de Staël had nursed him, and he had been seized with a passionate affection for her.³ His mind, though, was not cultivated, and Corinne could see no future in this intercourse, which she wittily described as "a Scotch air" in her life.⁴ It was at this time that Benjamin "was playing the husband"⁵ at Lausanne with that woman whose vulgarity made Mme. de Staël so indignant. The year 1811 had arrived, and the exile of Coppet was afraid of seeing that "something mysterious" arrive which "freezes one with terror."⁶ She did not know how thoroughly her presentiments were to be verified. Barante was leaving, and she wondered whether Juliette would be able to return. Benjamin's letters were often very distressing.⁷ Religious ideas alone comforted Corinne a little and they accentuated themselves in her mind.⁸

After reading the letters which Mme. de Staél wrote at this time, one understands very well the reasons that made Mme. Récamier decide to risk everything in order to see her again. Mme. de Staél had probably never suffered so much from her exile. "One is almost dead," she says, "when one is exiled. It is merely a tomb where the post arrives."⁹ Prosper, in spite of the tenderness of his declarations, did not succeed in satisfying a woman who complained of the *incompleteness* of his sentiments,¹⁰ and who accused him of preferring the interest of his career to his affections.¹¹ Benjamin was staying at Lausanne, and Corinne had not the courage to join him there.¹² "Life is not made for loving so sincerely,"¹³ declared the banished woman, and not without reason. Juliette, at least, had never failed her and remained one of the rare persons capable of consoling her.

¹ Letter No. 136 of M. Ch. de Loménie's collection. Copy.

² *Ibid.* ³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Compare Gautier, *Mme. de Staél et Napoléon*, p. 295.

⁵ Compare *Carnet de Constant. Causeries du Lundi.* P. 36.

⁶ Copy, No. 137. See *Coppet et Weimar*, p. 178. ⁷ *Ibid.* ⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Copy, No. 138. Phrase quoted in *Coppet et Weimar*, p. 208.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* See *Coppet et Weimar*, I, p. 182.
¹¹ *G.* 142. ¹² *E. i. 7*

¹¹ Copy 140. ¹² *Ibid.*

* •

12 *Ibid.*

13 *This*

A letter of May 1st expresses all Mme. de Staél's joy at the thought that Juliette was coming to see her. "I am so afraid, both of not seeing you and of compromising you," she writes, "that I am excited to a degree I do not like to tell you. . . . Ah, how little M. de Chateaubriand knows the heart when he considers me fortunate! He says that he should not write any more if he had money, and he looks at happiness from the same point of view. It is a vulgar side in a man otherwise very superior. As for me, I shall not change my conduct. I suffer, but the sentiment of a constant dignity keeps me up. The new Prefect has been and has asked me ten times over to write on the occasion of the birth of the King of Rome,¹ and I replied that it would be making myself ridiculous in the eyes of the Emp[eror] to meet him in this way, when he has so persistently driven me away, and that I should not budge. Auguste will tell you what I have written to the Duc de Rovigo as regards my passports. He will tell you all the facts concerning me, but how dear you are to me I alone know."²

This time, too, it was praiseworthy of Mme. Récamier, knowing the Emperor's resentment against Mme. de Staél, to decide in spite of everything to go to Coppet. The police of the Empire had never perhaps been more suspicious. It exercised its supervision or its authority everywhere. It was about this time that Colonel de Marbeuf married a young girl from Lyons who was pretty and rich, in consequence of the intervention of the Duc de Rovigo, who in a letter of February 26th, 1811, dared to write that the new dynasty had "its creatures and its families to form," and forbade a marriage which had been planned between this girl and M. de Durfort.³ Mme. Récamier must have known the dangers to which she exposed herself. For the sake of her friendship she felt it to be her duty to run this risk. It is only right, perhaps, that having been associated in this way with all Mme. de Staél's misfortunes she should, as a compensation, have a share in her glory.

¹ The King of Rome was born March 20th, 1811, which confirms the date we gave for this letter, May 1st, 1811.

² Autograph and unpublished letter, dated May 1st, No. 120 of M. Ch. de Loménie's MSS. ³ See the newspaper *Le Temps*, June 22nd, 1902.

CHAPTER X

EXILE AT CHÂLONS-SUR-MARNE

(JUNE 1811—JUNE 1812)

Accounts of the Duc de Rovigo and of Méneval.—Banishment of Mathieu de Montmorency (August 21, 1811); causes of this banishment; intrigues of the Montmorencys.—Departure of Mme. Récamier for Coppet (August 23rd).—She is banished (August 30th).—The letter from the Prefect of Leman to the Duc de Rovigo.—Mme. Récamier takes up her abode at Châlons-sur-Marne.—Mme. de Staél's letters.—Juliette's life at Châlons.—Augustus of Prussia and the appointment at Schaffhouse.—Letters from Mme. de Staél.—Marriage of Prosper de Barante.—Devotion of Mathieu and of Adrien de Montmorency.—Departure of Mme. Récamier for Lyons (June, 1812).

NAPOLEON had said openly in the Empress Josephine's *salon* (consequently before 1809) that “he should look upon any foreigner who frequented Mme. Récamier’s *salon* as his personal enemy.” This is attested by a letter from the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg-Strelitz.¹ The Emperor had not then disarmed before a woman who for her part had done nothing to protect herself and who was soon to be banished.

About Mme. Récamier’s banishment, the most diverse rumours have been circulated. In Volume V of his *Mémoires* which appeared in 1828, and which Juliette was able to read, the Duc de Rovigo interprets and endeavours to justify this measure.² He makes out that, after her husband’s ruin, Mme. Récamier went to live in the provinces, and that she never ceased from thenceforth to pass herself off as a victim of the Emperor. “Mme. Récamier,” he says, “lived in the provinces for her own reasons, and told her admirers when they begged

¹ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 90.

² P. 6 and following.

her to return to Paris that this did not depend upon herself, wishing to make them believe that it was the Emperor who prevented her, when really he was not thinking about her."

Méneval, Napoleon's secretary, in the second volume of his *Mémoires*, mixes up in the same way the history of Mme. Récamier's banishment. According to him, after the financial crisis of 1806, the Government heard from the police that the royalist Opposition, "by putting public opinion off the scent and by spreading abroad false news,"¹ had alarmed the holders of public stocks. Mme. Récamier was indicated as being among the "incorrigible" persons whom the police wished to see removed from Paris, together with Mme. d'Avaux, Mme. de Chevreuse, MM. de Duras, Lassalle, and Montrond. The Minister of Police received orders from Munich to banish these persons, with the exception of Mme. de Chevreuse, whom Talleyrand defended. Méneval had plenty of imagination. It was he who accused Mme. Récamier's father, M. Bernard, of abuse of confidence.² He also repeated the rumour that was current to the effect that Prince Augustus, in 1807, signed a promise of marriage "written in his blood."³ The promise certainly exists, but drawn up in very good ink. He made a mistake, for Mme. Récamier was not banished in 1806, and he says so himself⁴ after explaining the contrary. Méneval is more exact when he shows us the Emperor having all the police notes brought to him in 1810, recalling from their banishment most of his enemies of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, and only excepting from this amnesty Mme. de Chevreuse and Mme. de Staél.⁵ It was at this moment that Napoleon must have decided on Juliette's banishment.

The official papers and private correspondence allow us to re-establish facts that were changed by the authors of *Mémoires*. Mme. Récamier's banishment was the punishment for her long devotion to Mme. de Staél and the Montmorency family. M. Récamier tried in vain to put her on guard against this danger. In a letter of June 22nd, 1811, he says to her: "Is it true taut the ex-Director Barras is at Coppet with Mme.

¹ *Souv. et Corr.*, p. 11. In reference to this M. tells that Mme. de Staél wrote him when near Blois, "twenty of the most eloquent letters," to which he could not give her anything consoling in reply. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

² *Ibid.*, p. 13.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 400.

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de Staël, as that would be bad?"¹ At that date, though, precautions had become quite useless. It was Mathieu de Montmorency's turn in August. The official report of the Police General dated August 21st, 1811, has, on page 5 and under the heading of Ministerial Correspondence, the following indication: "The Minister charged the Prefect of Leman to inform M. Mathieu de Montmorency that he was not to return to Paris; that he was free to go to Coppet or elsewhere, provided that he remained at forty leagues' distance from Paris."²

A long and curious notice by Adrien de Montmorency explains to us the real causes which must have provoked this banishment. "In 1808," he says, "during the Bayonne Conferences I was at the watering-place of Coterets (*sic*). I made friends with the young Duc d'Ossuna, a member of the Spanish Junta who, on account of his health, had been allowed to come there for the waters. The idea of the deliverance of the King of Spain occurred to me. I helped the Duc d'Ossuna in his flight. He crossed the mountains disguised as a priest, and afterwards as a herdsman driving his cattle, and in this travesty he reached the valley of Aran. He was commissioned to let the central Junta of Seville know about our plans. I was sure of the courage of my friend and relative, who could not yet know anything about these circumstances. The names of Mathieu and Adrien de Montmorency were therefore entrusted to the secrecy of the negotiator and of the Junta. We advised this provisional Government to let us have its instructions in Paris and to approve our plans. We felt that we needed some signs of an understanding with the Regency in order to encourage the confidence of the royal family of Spain.

"The Princes having arrived at Valençay, I went to Ussé, to the house of our friend the Duc de Duras, who, with his unfailing devotion to the royal cause, willingly joined in our enterprise. Mathieu could not come to Ussé; he waited for me in Paris.

¹ *Lettres de M. Récamier* in M. Ch. de Loménié's MSS.

² *Archives nationales Fonds de la Secrét. d'Etat (Consulat et Empire)*. Ministerial papers A. F., 1517.

“ During the first period of their captivity the Princes were free to walk about in the Valençay Forest, and even to hunt there. This Forest adjoined the woods of the Saint-Aignan estate. As the duchess was our cousin, Mathieu and I announced our intention to her of paying her a visit during the shooting season. M. de Bartillac, who owned the Château of Selles in the neighbourhood of Valençay and Saint-Aignan, was also to serve our plans. Indiscretions were committed. The unfortunate Mme. de Saint-Aignan was inculpated and, although infirm, she was cruelly taken to the Blois prisons. In consequence of these imprudences the Princes were more strictly watched and kept prisoners within the enclosure of the Valençay Park.

“ Mathieu and I decided to confide in the Duc de San Carlos and the Chanoine Escoïquiz. Both of them were engaged with the education of King Ferdinand, the one as governor and the other as tutor of the Prince of Asturias.

“ They had just left Valençay, and were in Paris to negotiate, by the terms of the Treaty of Bayonne, about the establishment of the Princes. They were, according to the article of the treaty, to go and live in the Château of Navarre, the domain of which was assigned to them. I had some facilities for seeing the Duc de San Carlos and the Chanoine at the house of M. de Talleyrand, who was overwhelming them with considerations and attentions. The place would not have been convenient though for explanations. Mathieu had wisely thought of a more sure meeting place at the Hospice des Quinze-Vingts (Blind Asylum). The proposal was accepted by the two Spaniards. As chief director my cousin did the honours of the institution. He soon took them into the office of one of the principal men employed there, a M. Bertrand, who was absolutely devoted to his chief. It was there that the first overtures of the project were made.

“ It would be quite superfluous to develop here the plan of our enterprise. It seemed as though it must succeed, because what usually causes the failure of projects of this kind is the treason or venality of the subordinate agents. It was thus that Baron Kolly was betrayed later on. As for us, we had a sufficiently large number of friends at our disposal not to

require to buy the services of anyone. It is only fair to say that we did not find in the two confidants of the King all the ardour we could have desired for awakening in the souls of their Princes the energy and courage necessary for seconding our plans. The closest confidence, however, was established between us. They promised us to inform the King of our devotion, and we agreed that whilst awaiting the reply to the proposals, which the Duc de San Carlos was to take himself to Valençay, we should continue to think out all the means of carrying the plans out. Accordingly, in October, we took a journey along the coast of Normandy with the object of securing a place of refuge and the means of embarking. We found a place of refuge, which was as safe and as isolated as we could wish. It was a *château* just near the sea, belonging to a nobleman who was devoted to our cause. All these plans fell through, though, because we received no news from Valençay, and yet I learnt later on at Madrid from the King that the Duc de San Carlos had informed his Majesty of our intentions. It was on this same occasion that I obtained for M. de Bertillac the Order of Charles III, which he wanted.

"In 1809, Mathieu was at Aix-en-Savoie with his daughter, his son-in-law and myself, when we heard of the taking of the Pope and the decision to convey him to Grenoble. Mathieu took me with him to Montmélian, so that we might meet the Holy Father. It was announced that he would pass by the following morning at ten o'clock. It was eight at the latest when we heard a great noise of horses and of the soldiers in the escort. It was the Pope passing by. The tactics of the Colonel of police, charged with this barbarous expedition, consisted in having the time of the arrival announced all along the route as being two hours later than it was to be, so that his venerable prisoner should escape the attention and interest of the inhabitants. We scarcely had time to rush out of the hotel and approach the travellers. The police drove us back from the Pope's carriage. We could only get near to the one that followed, and Mathieu had time to offer his service and fortune to the Holy Father by the intermediary of a secret chamberlain, whom he had known during the Pope's first visit to Paris. My friend, a few days

later, went with his son-in-law to Grenoble with the object of devoting himself absolutely to His Holiness. On his return to Paris he had several interviews with the black Cardinals.¹ It was thus that the cardinals were designated whom Bonaparte had stripped of the insignia of the purple. The Dowager Duchesse de Duras, my brother, and the Chevalier de Thusy, who took the results of the subscription to the Cardinals in their place of banishment, know better than anyone the help that was given to them until 1814. Mathieu was one of the chief subscribers.

“During the summer of 1811 we visited the refuges and principal prisons where the Spanish prisoners of war were. It was another of our plans to make the acquaintance of their officers, in the hope that, if the chances of war brought about disturbances in France, the Spanish prisoners might unite with us. I remember that we paid a visit to the old Marquis de Saint-Simon in the fortress of Besançon. He was cared for and consoled by his noble daughter, Mlle. de Saint-Simon. Mathieu was struck by the proud attitude of this old man, but above all deeply touched by the dignity and nobility of the daughter’s conversation. She had saved her father’s life at Madrid and was, if I may thus express it, the hero of the story, her father was only the soldier of it. We had the consolation of being able to ease their lot by interesting the old Chevalier d’Oraison in them. He had been an officer in the life-guards of the Luxembourg company. He was in command there and granted them more liberty.

“After these visits to the prisons we went to Switzerland, where we were to meet Alexis de Noailles. We took a long farewell of him, as he was bravely leaving his country and going to England to be near our Princes, to whom he took the homage of our devotion, our projects, and our hopes. We were not to see him again until we met at Nancy. . . . It was about this time that a sentence of banishment reached my cousin at Coppet.”²

¹ See *Mme. R. et les amis de sa jeunesse*, pp. 398 and 103. Compare *Napoléon et les cardinaux noirs* (1810–1814), by Geoffroy de Grandmaison. Paris, Perrin, 1895.

² Unpublished notice by Adrien de Montmorency, about Mathieu de Montmorency, in M. Ch. de Loménié’s MSS.

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Mathieu de Montmorency met this disgrace with great self-possession and steadfastness. He wrote to Mme. Récamier the following letter :

"28th of August [1811]."

"There is no need to tell you, sweet friend, what we all feel at this moment. The worst of it is the state of your poor friend who, by an excess of delicacy, reproaches herself with it all. She makes me feel really the pain of this petty persecution, which I should otherwise have the force to withstand. I must confess to you, though, that the thought of you is one that I have to put away from me just now, in order not to be weak. But with your kindness and your generosity shall we not find a way of not being too long a time without meeting? Just at this moment if you only listened to your own feelings and simply came here, I fancy you would do harm to our friend. Choose between the little journey, short and mysterious, and the station of (illegible) where we could go to see you. We were to leave to-morrow, Adrien and I, but we wanted to wait for you and you are coming so late. I have not the courage to reproach you with it just now, but I shall lose a great part of your visit here of course.

"Adieu. Let me remind you, in the name of the truest and most sincere friendship, that just at these times, when everything tends towards emotion, you ought to be more than ever on your guard against what would pain me, Sosthènes, and the faithful Montmirail friend, what would again disturb your life and make you lose the fruit of your struggles and your generous resolutions. Take, from the very first moment, a very simple way in this respect. Before these last circumstances it would not have been for us to hinder anyone going to fetch you. Probably I could not have done so; I never even thought of it in our present position. But with a little courage and perseverance, and by appealing to the true source from whence we get all this, you can save everything and think only of the generous friendship which is so worthy of you. You know that mine is yours for ever. M."¹

¹ Unpublished letter, No. 43 of the collection of letters from M. de Montmorency in M. Ch. de Loménié's MSS. Sole address : Madame Juliette R.

In the midst of the difficulties that he himself was experiencing then, Mathieu did not forget Juliette. He tried to impress upon her the dangers of the journey, and the objections there were to her meeting Auguste de Staél again. His counsels were all in vain.

Among the factors which led to Mme. Récamier's departure for Coppet, we must undoubtedly put in the first rank the kind of defection with which Mme. de Staél was reproaching certain of her friends. M. de Balk, for instance, had behaved rather badly. He had, as Mme. de Staél wrote, "disguised" his fear under the plea of a chest affection, and the very evening before his announced departure he no longer dared to go to Coppet.¹ Mathieu de Montmorency and Mme. Récamier, in defiance of all threats, remained devoted to their friend. On the 23rd of August, 1811, Juliette started for Coppet. It was the time when the police of the Empire watched, with untiring zeal, all persons suspected of belonging to the Opposition. The young Duchesse de Chevreuse and Mme. de Nadaillac were the latest victims.²

Mme. Récamier wanted to see her friend again, and, in order to baffle the police, she announced her intention of going to the baths of Aix-en-Savoie, and took a passport for that watering-place. The enterprise was perilous. Esménard endeavoured to dissuade Mme. Récamier from it, but she had made up her mind. She wrote about her plans to Mme. de Staél. She would not yield to the entreaty brought her by a courier. She spent thirty-six hours at that house where her presence had formerly been the signal for so many fêtes. She then went to Richecourt, in Haute-Saône, to the house of her cousin, Baronne de Dalmassy. After this she started back to Paris, but on the 3rd of September M. Récamier was notified of the order for her banishment. At Dijon she was advised of it. Her husband came himself to confirm to her the order

¹ According to a copy of one of the letters from Mme. de Staél in M. Ch. de Loménie's collection. No. 135.

² See *Mme. R. et les amis de sa jeunesse*, Appendix. In 1809 Mme. d'Albany had been summoned to Paris by Napoleon and invited not to return to Florence, for some time at least, as she was said to be an obstacle there to the fusion between Tuscans and French (*Sainte-Beuve, Nouveaux Lundis*, V, pp. 435 and 436).

that she should thenceforth remain at a distance of more than forty leagues from Paris.¹

A collection of papers preserved in the *Archives Nationales*² enables us to reconstitute, with great exactitude, the details of these events, and to see the police of the Empire at work. On the 30th of August, 1811, the decision of the Government was made. The Commissary of the Prefecture of Police in charge of the IVth Ward of Paris was instructed to find out where Mme. Récamier was staying, and to take suitable measures for letting her know about this order. On the 5th of September, the IVth Ward replied that "the said person" was at Coppet, that her husband had been notified of the order, and that "he had promised to inform her of it at once, and he answered for her obedience to it." M. Récamier's letter advising his wife of his interview with the Prefect of Police, is dated September 3rd.³ On the 2nd of September, the Prefect of Leman wrote a long confidential letter to the Duc de Rovigo in the following terms :

"MONSIEUR,

"Here are a few details which are not important enough to be written to the Minister, but piquant enough for me to tell in confidence to M. the Duc de Rovigo :

"For the last two or three months Madame de Staël has been asking Madame Récamier to come, but the latter did not care much about visiting Coppet in search of adventures. The letters grew more pressing and spoke of misfortune, neglect, and despair. Madame Récamier was touched, she considered the journey one of heroic devotion, said nothing about it to her friends, and started. A letter preceded her to Coppet, and arrived a few days after M. Mathieu de Montmorency, who was still there, had received his sentence of banishment. He rushed off to meet the beautiful traveller, warned her of the danger to which she was exposing herself, and stopped her at a village. Madame de Staël hurried there; their first interview was enshrouded in mystery, and the religious Montmorency was the only witness of it. The two friends

¹ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 169 and following.

² F^v. 6569 (2688).

³ See *Mme. Récamier et les amis de sa jeunesse*, p. 73 and following.

were deeply affected, they became excited, their courage returned, and behold them at Coppet! The next day Madame de Staél collected as many people as she could, called them her friends, and thus proved to Madame Récamier that she was less neglected than people imagined. But a nephew of the latter, who is at Geneva with M. Pasquier, Director of the Customs, had heard of M. de Montmorency's misadventure. This is not surprising, as everything Madame de Staél knows is soon repeated a hundred times over with all the embellishment it pleases her fancy to add to it. She had not failed in this instance, as it pleased her to say that it was for her sake a Montmorency, the devout Mathieu, had let himself be banished. Well, this nephew of Madame Récamier was alarmed, on account of the rumours he had heard, for his aunt's safety, as he had just learned that she had arrived at Coppet. He hastened there to take her away. Madame de Staél opposed this objectionable plan with all her eloquence and, according to what is affirmed, with tears. The intrepid rescuer, who has known Madame de Staél for a long time and does not care particularly for her, persisted in his scheme. It took place and, I believe, to the satisfaction of Madame Récamier, who, although she had only been at Coppet since the previous evening, was already feeling her own imprudence more than her friendship for Madame de Staél. She arrived at Geneva yesterday evening towards ten o'clock, and I have reason to believe that she is starting back to Paris while I am writing these lines, and that she is accompanied by her nephew, who will not leave her until she is at the gates of the capital. The latter has been to consult me to know whether he has not done well to act in this way. Without appearing either to encourage or discuss the fears that had actuated him, I told him that it was always wise to separate anyone in whom he was interested from the woman who had incurred the displeasure of the Emperor by her misconduct.

"Coppet is in mourning it appears. So much the better, as it is one lesson more and I hope everyone may profit by it. M. Mathieu de Montmorency left a few hours before the *defection* of Mme. Récamier. He is less distressed by his exile than by the cause to which he attributes it. 'If, at

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least,' he said, 'we might think that it was for the cause of religion, for the affairs of the Council, the circumstance would have been so propitious and the banishment would have been so honourable for me, so meritorious before God and man. But what will be said when it is known that it is for the sake of Mme. de Staél, for a Protestant, and a woman so worldly, and that it was at her house that the order was given me, etc. . . .'

"He is convinced that on account of this circumstance the greater part of his religious influence will crumble away. It appears, therefore, that he feels inclined to go far away from everyone, in order to expiate this stain on his life. The most amusing thing about these complaints is that he made them before Mme. de Staél.

"I have just been assured that the elder son of the latter, who for a long time has been desperately in love with Mme. Récamier but without any requital, in order to console himself for the flight of the beauty of his dreams is going to follow her to Paris.

"I beg your Excellency to excuse the liberty I have taken and the confusion of these lines, which I am writing in haste in order not to miss the courier. I beg you at the same time, etc. . . . Capelle."¹

The report of the Police General, dated September 10th, under the heading *Correspondance ministerielle* (page 3) is as follows :

"Execution of His Majesty's order:

"According to His Majesty's orders, Dame Récamier has been notified that she must remain at a distance of forty leagues away from Paris. She was then supposed to be at Coppet, where Sieur Mathieu de Montmorency also was, to whom the same notification had been sent a few days before.² The

¹ This letter was published by Ch. Nauroy, *Le Curieux*, on the 15th of December, 1883. Capelle was appointed by Louis XVIII., in 1814, Prefect of Aisne, and in 1815 he went with the King to Ghent (See *M.O.T.*, III, pp. 501, 519; V, p. 265; VI, pp. 102 and 193. It was he, as is well known, who signed the July Decrees.

² *Arch. Nat., Fonds de la Sécrét. d'État (Consulat et Empire).* Ministerial papers, AF., IV, 1517.

report of September 12th contains the analysis of Prefect Capelle's letter.¹ In a letter dated October 2nd, the Duc de Rovigo acknowledges the receipt of this information and invites the Prefect of Leman to inform him of all the interesting events resulting from this affair.²

"After receiving the notification of her exile, Juliette Récamier went to Paris *incognito* for two days.³ She then decided to go to Châlons-sur-Marne, accompanied by her young niece, Amélie Cyvoct. She found a Prefect in this town who was little inclined to continue the persecution of which she was the object. The La Rochefoucaulds of Doudeauville, intimate friends of hers, were living at the Château of Montmirail, twelve leagues away. Sosthènes, the son of the Duc and Duchess de la Rochefoucauld, had married the only daughter of Mathieu de Montmorency. His name has been mentioned before in our story, and he became one of the most faithful of Juliette's defenders. Mathieu de Montmorency frequently went to Montmirail, but for three months he did

¹ Same papers.

² The letters of the Duchesse de Raguse to Juliette give us the remainder of the information as regards the causes of the banishment. On the 13th of October, she writes as follows: "You know that I, less than anyone, could venture on taking steps in an affair of this kind as far as the person is concerned on whom it depends. Nevertheless, if you think I can be of use to you, do not hesitate to tell me and I shall be happy to prove to you that my friendship is not a barren one." On the 7th of November, she writes: "I am told that you knew there were two individuals in your society playing the odious rôle of spies, and that you tolerated them because you believed yourself, by the uprightness of your conduct, above all false reports. This confidence, which is just like you, has nevertheless been the cause of your misfortune, for these same men were obliged to calumniate you in order to carry out their mission, as they had no food for their observation. And your innocence was not enough to protect you from their vile mission. I shall never see them without a feeling of hatred and I will give you their names, as if you do not know you ought to be warned. The two who are mentioned are M. de Montet (?) and M. d'Aubusson. . . ." In the same letter we read: "But I am forgetting to tell you what I heard about your exile. It is said that the real reason for your sentence was not your visit to Mme. de St . . . but the remarks made at your house on the subject of war and politics." On March 25th, 1812, the same correspondent writes: "I spoke to the Queen of Naples and she promised me that she would plead your cause. She even seemed to be touched with regard to your position. . . ." On the 21st of July, she writes: "The Emperor's absence at present condemns us to inaction respecting your interests, and you to resignation and patience." Unpublished letters in M. Ch. de Loménie's collection.

³ See *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 174 and following.

not venture to go to Châlons to see his friend. He restricted himself during that time to writing to her."

On hearing of Mathieu de Montmorency's banishment, Mme. de Stael wrote to Mme. Récamier :

“5 o'clock.

“Dear friend,—Your departure has plunged my life once more into darkness. You not only have admirable qualities, but you take an interest in everything you do, and this makes up to me for the most animated life. It is a strange fatality that I should see in you and in Mathieu just what would in every way make me happy, and then that I should be separated by an abyss from the two friends who stretch out their arms to me from the other side. Another idea has occurred to me when thinking of Mathieu. It is that he is my children's guardian. He accepted this charge, as you know, on M. de Stael's death, and consequently it was almost his duty to come here just as Albert was about to leave. I am telling you this so that you may be able to make use of the fact when talking to J., for you will, I am sure, be very much preoccupied about this banishment, just as I am. Poor me, for I have every reason to believe that I am the cause of it. Heaven has preserved me, I hope, from what would be a more intense grief still, the troubling of your existence. Remember that I shall expect a few lines from you on Saturday and Monday, the 14th and 16th of September. My dear friend, my generous sister, do not care for me any less now after doing so much for me, for if you were to forget me for the next ten years I should never cease loving you. Tell Auguste that he ought to be nicer to me and not always be hurting me as mildly as possible. To-day again I was talking to him for half an hour, and he found a way to give me little pin-pricks, and yet it was with a fresh emotion that I saw him again, for in my son there is the man you care for. Do me the service, you who are the source of all the good in this world for me, of telling him to try to resemble you. He would then be a thousand times nicer, and it would be to you that he would owe it. What you have in common with Mathieu, for I never separate my two guardian angels

now, is a way of sparing one's feelings so that you never do the least harm. There is in this a kind of delicacy which I have never known except in you two. I cannot stop writing to you and I love you in the depths of my heart, there where love used to dwell and where there will never more be anything but friendship.”¹

Mme. de Staél knew then about the mutual love of Mme. Récamier and Auguste de Staél. The terms of her letter give the idea that she had nothing against the free expression of these sentiments. When she knew that Juliette was on her way to Coppet she sent her son Auguste as courier, with the following letter :

“ You will understand my despair, dear friend. I leave Auguste to tell you all I feel, if it is possible for anyone to express it. In Heaven’s name do not run risks. The meeting at Treslet seems to me the best idea, but I could not endure any misfortune falling upon you. It is in the name of my own grief that I speak. I know there is only that which will influence you. Oh, my angel, have pity on me.”²

When, finally, she heard of the measure which had been taken with regard to Juliette, she expressed her despair in touching terms :

“ I cannot speak to you, I can only fling myself at your feet and beseech you not to hate me. In God’s name be energetic on your own behalf so that I may live. Extricate yourself from all this, let me feel that you are happy, that your admirable generosity has not ruined you. Ah God, I do not know what I am doing, but I adore you. Believe me and prove to me that you believe it by doing something for yourself, for I shall have no rest until you are free from this banishment. Adieu, adieu! When shall I see you again? Not in this world. Adieu. Sunday.”³

¹ Text like the original in M. Ch. de Loménie’s MSS., No. 128. Partially published in *Coppet et Weimar*, pp. 205 and 206.

² Autograph letter which has never been published, No. 145 of M. Ch. de Loménie’s MSS.

³ From the autograph letter No. 146 of M. Ch. de Loménie’s MSS. Text published in *Mme. R. et les amis de sa jeunesse*, pp. 82 and 83, and in *Coppet et Weimar*, pp. 207 and 208. See Mathieu de Montmorency’s letter of condolence, No. 44 of the collection of his letters in *Mme. R. et les amis de sa jeunesse*, p. 85.

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Perhaps, too, a fragment of one of Mme. de Staél's letters to Camille Jordan which has never been published belongs to this time. It seems as though the commencement of this fragment refers to the love of Auguste de Staél and Mme. Récamier :

“ their situation, for they are too much in love to be able to judge of it sufficiently, whilst I criticize it as though I were writing my biography. I could scarcely be more wretched than I am on this earth, and there were a million chances that this result would occur, but up to the present time I have not failed in respect to the author of our destiny, and I now say like Job : ‘ Shall we receive good at the hand of God and shall we not receive evil ? ’ As far as I am concerned I think I have said too much, but I could not answer a man like you in an ordinary way, and I can only talk to you from the depths of my soul. Have you anywhere near you the one who would console me for everything if I could see him again ? ¹ Tell him that I wrote to him at Toulouse, and let me know what you think of him as regards his state of mind and health. As far as I know there is no life of Schiller. As to Herder there is a notice by Jean Müller about him at the commencement of his works. I hear that Mme. de Wohlzogen is writing a life of Schiller. I am reading just now a kind of confession by Goethe in German, which up to the present does not go beyond seventeen years. The title is *The Poetry and Truth of my Life*. Sismondi is giving a course of lectures at Geneva on the literary history of the South of France, in which there is much that is good and which is having great success. I thank Mme. Julie for being good to me ; her eyes told me that I should be pitied by her. Kisses to your children.” ²

At Châlons, Mme. Récamier took up her abode at the *Hôtel de la Pomme d'Or*.³ Her friend, the Marquise de Catellan, spent a few weeks with her. After her departure Juliette took a small flat in the Rue du Cloître. Her father, her husband, her old friend Simonard, and her cousin, Mme. de Dalmassy, came in turn to stay with her.

¹ Mathieu de Montmorency.

² Boubée collection, Lyons.

³ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 176 and following.

Auguste de Staël, at least twice, brought her letters from Coppet. Mathieu de Montmorency had gone to Toulouse. He did not pay Juliette a visit until January, 1812.¹ An active correspondence kept Mme. Récamier in constant touch with that group of intimate friends among whom she was the connecting link. Adrien de Montmorency wrote her, on the 18th of September from Dampierre, this letter, in which certain mysterious expressions were intended to baffle the police.

"In the midst of so many calamities, the grief at missing you twenty-four hours before your departure was one cruelty more. I arrived not quite a day after you had left, and I cannot console myself about it. But, dear friend, why did you not think of letting me have a line in Paris? I had brought you something from *my cousin* whom I left at Lyons. I will send it to you at the first opportunity. I know with what kind devotion your friend accompanied you, but so much friendship and zeal were your due. I do not know what to say to you, for my heart is full. I do not know whether you have arrived at your destination. I am sending you this mournful complaint from this house. You have a young friend here whose heart is full of pity, friendship and compassion for you. As you have chosen a place which is fifteen leagues from his abode, you will often have visits. And as to me, do you not think I shall come to see you? I think Félicité² will be back from the south towards the middle of next month. A visit then to her and to you will of course be well-timed. Just as I am writing to you on this round table in the drawing-room, with everyone making so much noise because half of this company is deaf, I have received a letter from *Aug.* telling me of his arrival in Paris. I have made an appointment with him for to-morrow. You can imagine about what and about whom we shall talk. Adieu. Until I receive a letter from you I shall be intensely uneasy and unhappy. A thousand homages, and blessings on that good and delicately kind friend who accompanied

¹ Not in 1813, as is given by mistake in *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 182.

² Mathieu de Montmorency.

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you Send a line quickly in reply to this barren letter, but what can one say?"¹

Mme. Récamier had consented to see Prince Augustus again in the course of the year 1811. She had made an appointment with him for the end of the summer at Schaffhouse.² Mme. Récamier's sentence of banishment upset all her plans and at least gave her a pretext for avoiding this interview. The Prince went there and had to return to Prussia without seeing Juliette. He was very angry at first.³ "Anyhow," he wrote to Mme. de Stael, "I hope that this will cure me of the foolish love I have been nourishing for four years." When he heard that at the very moment when he had been expecting Juliette, she had been served with a sentence of banishment which had obliged her to make hasty arrangements for installing herself elsewhere, he wrote her from Berne, on the 26th of September, 1811, a very affectionate letter in which he only complained of not having been told and of having "taken a journey of three hundred leagues uselessly." The Emperor was informed of the incident, and on the 26th of October he wrote from Rotterdam the following letter to Marshal Davoût:⁴ "It is true that Prince Augustus went to Basle and from thence to Erfurt. The fact is that Prince Augustus is madly in love with Mme. Récamier; he has even promised to marry her. She is not so foolish, and she laughs and makes fun about it. She was not at the rendez-vous at Basle. So you see all this is not very political. This young man has no balance and no head, and everyone says that the family of Prussia is distressed about it."

Mme. Récamier had something fresh now to occupy her

¹ Unpublished letter in M. Ch. de Loménie's collection.

² *Souv. et Corr.*, I, pp. 146 and 147.

³ On the 24th of August the Prince wrote from Egra, announcing to Mme. R. that he should be at Schaffhouse on the 19th of September, and that he was undertaking this journey without the permission of "his relative." On the 21st of September he wrote to her from Schaffhouse as follows: "I am, at any rate, very grateful, Madame, for your kind attention in causing me to travel 300 leagues for nothing, as this has cured me at last and completely of a foolish love which had made me unhappy for so long. . . ." It was Schlegel who announced to him the news of Mme. R.'s banishment. M. Ch. de Loménie's MSS.

⁴ *Lettres inédites de Napoléon Ier*, published by Léon Lecestre, I, p. 173.

mind. Immediately after her exile she remained for some time without writing to Mme. de Staél. The latter complained of it.¹ She declared that nothing would have pleased her more than to stay for a time in the same place as her friend, no matter where it was, but that she was held back by the fear of injuring Mme. Récamier. She added that she was overwhelmed with utter despair. "Nothing interests me any more," she writes, "nothing gives me any more pleasure, life is now to me like a ball when the music has ceased and everything, except what has been taken away from me, appears colourless. I can assure you that if only you could read my soul you would be sorry for me. . . . Every gust of wind alarms me when I think of the sea, every other alternative alarms me too, in fact it is a moral disorganization, such as I hope you may never know."² Mme. de Staél then affirms that by going away she will be doing a service to Mme. Récamier and to Mathieu de Montmorency.³ She adds: "I am incapable of loving anyone except you and Mathieu. If I were to lose those who are with me, no doubt I should feel in the same way that I love Auguste, Albertine, Schlegel, etc. But the nature of my imagination is such that all my feelings are centred on you two."⁴

Just at that time Prosper de Barante married. On one of his frequent journeys to Paris, Mme. de la Briche had introduced him to Mlle. Césarine d'Houdetot, grand-daughter of the celebrated Mme. d'Houdetot. The young girl was very intelligent and charmingly beautiful. Prosper fell in love with her and she accepted him. On the 28th of November, 1811, Napoleon signed their marriage contract, and their union was a long and happy one.⁵

Juliette could not bear any ill-will to Prosper de Barante for offering to another a heart the homage of which she had refused. No doubt Mme. de Staél, in the state of discouragement

¹ According to a letter of October 31st, 1811, No. 150 of M. Ch. de Loménie's MSS., a great part of which is published in *Coppet et Weimar*, pp. 209, 210, 211. It is a long letter of eight pages.

² The same letter, pp. 2 and 3 of the manuscript.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁴ P. 8 of the letter. See other passages of it in *Coppet et Weimar* as quoted above.

⁵ Victor du Bled, article on the *Souvenirs de Barante* in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, May 15th, 1900, pp. 395 and 396. Compare Sainte-Beuve, *Portr. cont.*, IV, 42, note 1.

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ment to which a long persecution had brought her, must have taken less philosophically the news of the marriage of a man for whom she had felt such passionate affection.

Whilst Mme. Récamier was living at the inn at Châlons the Château of Coppet was like a prison.¹ Baron de Vogt came to Geneva but the Prefect had waited on him and had doubtless requested him to go away again, as he did not send a line to his friends.² Lady Webb begged Mme. Récamier to go to Lyons.³ Auguste de Staél went to Paris to ask for a passage for his mother on a frigate that was about to start from Cherburg.⁴ Mme. de Staél then asked to be allowed to go to Italy, but she did not even receive a reply to her request.⁵ She became more and more irritated, and compared herself to "Hugolin in the tower."

Juliette was much more calm. Her letters were of a "religious serenity." "How far removed I am from that courageous tranquillity which reigns with you," wrote the Coppet exile to the exile of Châlons.⁶ "You are more isolated, more to be pitied in your situation than I am in mine," she continues, "and yet it is you who console me. What I have, though, and what God has preserved you from, because you did not deserve such cruel pain, is a gloomy discouragement which does not allow a single ray of hope to penetrate to my soul. . . . You have more character than I have. . . ."⁷

Mme. de Staél certainly does appear at this time to have been quite beside herself, and she was so nervous that she finished by finding fault with everyone. She declared that Baron de Vogt was "sanctimonious,"⁸ and could not understand Juliette's "indulgence" as far as he was concerned. Camille Jordan wrote to her trying to make her ashamed of her state of mind and exhorting her to "read the works of the illustrious dead," but she was indignant that an intelligent man should talk to her in such a way.⁹ In her general discontent she became unjust. "People get impatient," she

¹ According to the copy of a letter, No. 152 of the letters from Mme. de Staél in M. Ch. de Loménié's collection.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ According to the original unpublished letter of November 24th, 1811, No. 153 of M. Ch. de Loménié's MSS.

⁶ Original unpublished letter of December 5th, 1811, No. 154 of M. Ch. de Loménié's MSS.

⁸ Copy of letter No. 155 of M. Ch. de Loménié's MSS.

⁹ *Ibid.*

writes, "with the grief of their friends. It is as though they are reproaching themselves privately for doing nothing to alleviate it."¹

Juliette, who was now installed near her cousin, was awaiting with impatience Auguste de Staél's visit. The war news interfered with all travelling plans.² Mme. de Catellan went to see her about the 1st of March, 1812.³ There was certainly nothing very soothing in the epistles she received from Coppet, but they were full of the most touching expressions of passionate affection. "Can you not feel yourself being kissed," says Mme. de Staél at the end of one of them, "by my face bathed with tears, and will you deign to raise your eyes to Heaven in prayer for me when you receive this letter?"⁴

These affectionate protestations softened a little for Mme. Récamier the bitterness of a difficult situation. She was far from having the large fortune which allowed Mme. de Staél to make and carry out her huge plans. From a letter she wrote to Gérard, October 11th, 1811, we see that she was even rather in difficulty with regard to money matters.⁵ A great many *wise* friends, according to what Mme. Lenormant tells us,⁶ had either abandoned her or contented themselves with giving her advice that it was impossible for her to follow. The Duc d'Abrantès in Paris and Camille Jordan in Lyons, however, remained faithful to her. The Montmorencys, more than any other friends, did their utmost to alleviate for her the miseries of exile, to warn her of dangers, and they even tried to obtain for her a favour which she herself does not appear to have solicited.

Mathieu de Montmorency's letters, always of a sermonizing kind, attest a clear-sighted and sure affection. He writes to her as follows :

¹ Copy of letter No. 155 of M. Ch. de Loménié's MSS.

² *Ibid.*

³ According to the original, unpublished letter of March 13th, 1812, No. 156 of Mme. de Staél's MS. letters in M. Ch. de Loménié's collection.

⁴ Unpublished autograph letter of May 23rd, 1812, No. 157 of M. Ch. de Loménié's MSS.

⁵ See *Corresp. de Fr. Gérard*, 1867 edit., p. 302 and following.

⁶ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 177.

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“ MONTMIRAIL, 10th of December [1811].¹

“ I believe, if I cared to count, that two letters arrived here this morning from you, and there was not one for me, but I cannot be jealous of a correspondence of this kind. I know what its object, its spirit and intention is, and I only hope, with all my heart and for your own happiness, that the principal correspondent may be satisfied with you. In that case I am sure to be. I have confidence that you will not allow yourself to be discouraged, in spite of all the obstacles of your position and the petty trials of doubt and despondency which never fail to assail one at the beginning of a sincere conversion. Remember that you promised me to go forward a few steps, even if you did not go quickly. I am counting on seeing the proof of this for myself next week, a great part of which I expect to spend in Paris. The hope of having some good talks with you is not the least of the motives which attracts me there. . . . We have another mutual interest that is very sad. I have had a letter from our friend, who complains of my severe and even unjust judgment with regard to that letter from Augustus which made us uneasy. You have perhaps received a similar one from her. It appears to me that she has no intention of changing her plans, so that by this time her departure must be very near. I do not quite know where to write to her, so that I feel inclined to add a short letter for you to give to Auguste. I beg you not to leave it in a certain portfolio. Adieu. I shall have so many things to say to you. I send you all my affectionate homages. If our friend has started, or definitely fixed the day of her departure, you would be very kind to let me know, so that I might arrange accordingly. Adieu again, there is a veritable chorus here of good wishes for you.”²

¹ See other letters from him of the same period in *Mme. R. et les amis de sa jeunesse*, p. 96 and following. *Ibid.*, p. 99 and following. *Ibid.*, p. 101 and following. *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 180 and following.

² Unpublished letter from M. de Montmorency, No. 50 of M. Ch. de Loménie's collection. See in the *Lettres de Mme. Récamier*, published by Degérando, a note from Juliette to Mme. Degérando dated December 15th, 1811.

Adrien de Montmorency was still more affectionate, and his situation allowed him to be more active, as the following letter proves :

“ MONT., December 16th [1811].

“ The good-natured Sosthènes is wild with impatience to see you and starts to-morrow. And I, too, I am leaving my poor exiled friend and you whom I only saw for a few hours.¹ But I assure you that I came away from that pretty little room, where I had found again something of your elegant life, penetrated with emotion and with admiration for your calmness and courage. I could never have believed that you would have added so much force of character to so much charm. We had seen the one who is the innocent cause of your misfortune so overwhelmed and crushed by this unbearable exile! And yet what a difference there is between her situation and yours. Anyhow, all my thoughts since seeing you, my very dear friend, render you all homage and do honour to the affection I had for you from the first. I shall see Mme. de la R. from Paradise at P. I have a feeling, some presentiment in the depths of my heart, which persuades me that it will not be quite useless. I shall tell you about her in my letters, but *without mentioning her* except as your friend. I shall write to you always enclosing my letters to M. Réc[amier] and will you do the same, send my letters to him. But make sure that they will be promptly forwarded to me.

“ Adieu. I am returning to a place which was only dear to me formerly on account of your presence. Adieu, my eternal friendship for you, my inviolable attachment to yourself and my unchangeable devotion to your misfortunes which will ever be mine! Above all do not forget the delightful plan you have made for this spring : those *three days* spent in a *very friendly* and *very solitary* way. When you or I speak of *your cousin* it will mean *yourself*. Do you understand? I shall ask you about your cousin's plans, and I shall

¹ On the 13th of December, Adrien de Montmorency spent an evening with Mme. R. at the *Pomme d'Or*, according to an unpublished letter.

mean your own. When I really want to speak of her I shall say Mme. Dalmassy."¹

Adrien de Montmorency brought back to Paris a sad but delicious impression of a few hours he had spent with Mme. Récamier at Châlons. It seemed to him that, although all her life she had given proof of her charm, her kindness and agreeableness, all her nobility of soul had developed under her great reverses. "You have," he said to her, "to quote Bossuet's expression '*that I know not what of completeness which misfortune gives to virtue.*'"² In the interest of his friend, Adrien saw the Duchesse de Raguse (the friend from Paradise) and Mme. de Boigne (Adèle). He objected, on the other hand, to call on Mme. d' Abrantès.

When M. Récamier himself went to Châlons, taking with him packets of letters for Juliette, Adrien was able to express his feelings more freely, as not only had Mme. Récamier been warned not to see her friends, but her correspondence was zealously watched. The *friends in uniform*, as Adrien called them, did not dare to intervene. He did all that he could, particularly with regard to Junot, and in order to keep Mme. Récamier informed of everything, he had recourse to a series of stratagems.

"January 2nd [1811].

"I wrote to you the day before yesterday, and now the traveller who is about to have the happiness of seeing you offers to take a letter to you. I am sorry not to have known earlier about his departure, as I should like to have sent you some trifle for a New Year's present and there is not time. But I must tell you that I endeavoured to see General Junot on your behalf and I found him at the house of the Russian Ambassador. I can assure you that it would have been impossible to speak of you with more zeal, more friendship, and above all he proved by a long conversation, which was very frank and open, how much he had done. He reminded me of

¹ Unpublished letter from Adrien de Montmorency in M. Ch. de Loménié's collection. No address.

² Unpublished letter of December 30th, 1811, in M. Ch. de Loménié's collection.

all the occasions on which he had done what he could for you. But I repeat again, I have never seen more friendship and more cleverness and intelligence in that friendship. In the most ingenious way he kept returning to the subject. The other day he spoke of *Angerville* and he was almost on the point of obtaining it, and all this with a way of talking of you to him, which is most honourable to your character. In short he delighted me. We agreed to see each other again. I fancy that there is no better way for you of obtaining, in the spring, what we all hope for so ardently.

“But as M. de Narb[e], on account of his new post, is near him, I shall see that if there should be any question of you when he is present, he should speak in a way to put you in a *favourable light*. This is what I am in a hurry to tell you, and so am sending a letter that will start immediately. Your Paradise friend also spoke very warmly of you, and I am to dine with her. I warn you that from henceforth in speaking of the D. d’Ab. I shall say *your friend Elisa*.¹ Thanks to these indications we can understand the following letter, in which the correspondent, besides telling about the steps he is taking, speaks of the events of the day.

“ Saturday, February 12th.

“Your little letter was very nice, very charming, and as sweet as the honey of Mount Ida. I should never cease my pretty speeches if I were to let myself go, as regards all the attraction with which you inspire me for yourself and the admiration I feel for your situation. Have faith in me, in my anxious impatience to serve you, and I might say in my torture at the impotence of my uselessness. Trust to all the energy of my constant friendship for finding out, managing, and influencing persons who, sooner or later, will make your cause triumph. I repeat that no one is more zealous and intelligent than your friend Elisa. I have been to her house, and I would only go there for you. Nothing is any longer

¹ Unpublished letter from Adrien de Montmorency in M. Ch. de Loménie’s MSS. No address. This letter appears to have been written in a hurry. See letters from Mathieu de Montmorency in *Mme. R. et les amis de sa jeunesse*, p. 105 and following; p. 108 and following; pp. 116, 117 and following.

painful when it is for you. Nothing costs me anything then, and I am quite willing to be thought tiresome and a nuisance if only I can talk of you.

"Our Paradise friend is just as nice and just as good a friend, but she is only gracious, and there is no great resource there for an affair like yours. Your affair can only be treated between *Elisa and him without any intermediary*. She will put her whole heart and pride into it, while as for me (poor me!) I shall be the worrying fly to buzz round her ears and sting her if she gets sleepy. There is my humble rôle for you, unless certain rumours turn out to be true about the situation of the person who came on horseback to pay you such strange visits at Clichy. Do you remember? As, before all things, you are as clever and shrewd mentally as you are beautiful, you will guess what I mean. I should not then be useless. I suppose you will see Félicité. She is a good girl who loves you well and honourably. If you failed in strength she would give you some, for she has an abundance of that. Adieu.¹ . . . War seems probable. It was thought that the Comte de Nesselrode was on his way, but now no one believes that rumour. It was said that he was madly in love with your little cousin Adèle, and that he wanted to marry her. Answer that! Did you want to make a mystery of it to me? Was it M. Lemontey who made a parody of the *Itin.* of M. Chateaubriand in M. de *Châteauterne*. It is wretched. Adieu."²

During this time Mme. de Staél, who was at Geneva, was as desolate there as everywhere else. She advised Juliette to read Mme. du Deffand's letters to Horace Walpole.³ "She is a person," writes Mme. de Staél, "whose faults are something like mine. . . . It is a curious thing this magic lantern of names, some of which I have known, the sons of whom you have known and both of us the families. . . . And then what is perfectly natural seems to retrace for us something of our own life."⁴ Mme. Récamier must have written some piquant

¹ Society news follows.

² Unpublished letter from Adrien de Montmorency in M. Ch. de Loménie's collection.

³ Copy of letter No. 162. Compare *Coppet et Weimar*, pp. 213 and 214.

⁴ *Ibid.*, No. 163.

observations, for she gets in another letter from Geneva the following lines:¹—“Your reflections about Mme. du Deffand’s letters are very witty and I am quite of your opinion about her character, but she is natural, and I cannot tell you how that quality, alone even, suffices for winning me.” The two friends also discussed Étienne’s *Conaxa*, which Mme. de Staél preferred to the *Deux Gendres*.²

Mme. Récamier would not consent to Auguste de Staél’s binding himself to a sentiment which could not last for ever, and Mme. de Staél congratulated her about this,³ blaming herself for having yielded too much to her own inclination for Barante. Auguste de Staél went again to Châlons, but did not stay there. He returned to Coppet “very amiable,” as his mother declared.⁴ Benjamin wrote to Geneva some very touching letters about his memories of the past. As to Prosper, he was now alone with his young wife in Vendée.⁵ Schlegel was living near to Mme. de Staél, but she owned that he had faults which sometimes hid his virtues.⁶ Mme. de Staél had just written her *Réflexions sur le suicide*, and she sent a rough copy of it to her friend.⁷ She was also at work at a historical poem in prose by *Richard*.⁸ When telling Mme. Récamier about this fresh occupation, about which she consulted her, she added gracefully: “The memory of you remains everywhere like a whiff from an elevated place.”⁹ The two exiled women planned to see each other again in Germany, if the measures taken against them were not revoked, and, in case this idea could be carried through, Mme. de Staél advised Juliette not to disdain the affection Prince Augustus had for her.¹⁰

To sum up briefly, Mme. Récamier accepted her situation in a much better way than Mme de Staél had accepted hers, and out of prudence forbade her friends to go to see her.¹¹

¹ Copy of letter No. 164.

² *Ibid.*, p. 164. Compare *Coppet et Weimar*, pp. 216 and 217.

³ Mme. de Staél’s letter, No. 164 of the MSS. quoted (a copy), is very plain on this subject.

⁴ Copy of letter No. 165.

⁵ *Ibid.*, No. 165.

⁶ *Ibid.*, No. 166. See *Coppet et Weimar*, p. 223.

⁷ *Ibid.*, No. 165. ⁸ *Ibid.*, No. 166; fragment of letter No. 173.

⁹ *Ibid.*, No. 166.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, No. 167.

¹¹ Fragment of a letter from Mme. de Staél, No. 161 of M. Ch. de Loménie’s MSS.

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Mathieu de Montmorency alone was more exacting than all the others and, by right of his old and faithful friendship, he continued to mingle reproaches with his compliments. "I fancy I have discovered," he writes from Toulouse on the 27th of February to the *sweet friend*, "that one of your misfortunes is not to quite know yourself what you want, and at what you wish to arrive for yourself. . . . You seem to me to be affected, as regards the great business of life, with the same disease as our friend. With her it is more particularly as regards making up her mind about settling down, and about her money matters. There is a note of the deepest dejection running through her letters, which is very grievous."¹ Juliette was not very explicit with Mathieu. She only wrote him a few very general phrases,² for fear perhaps of the interminable sermons and the piously indiscreet questions of the man who styled himself rightly "a grumbling Mentor."

Adrien de Montmorency, on the contrary, was neither discouraged by the failure of his efforts on her behalf, nor by the mysterious silences of Juliette. He wrote to her as follows :

" March 5th, 1812.

" I have waited a few days before replying to your kind but very late letter, so that I might tell you all you asked me. I must mention though your recent silence. You are in such a very unhappy situation that I must respect everything, even your silence. But I was astonished that you did not write to me, I could not understand you in applying to new friends rather than to me. I considered this indifferent coolness was almost ingratitude, as it could not be forgetfulness. I am convinced that all the waters of Lethe would have to pass through your heart if you are ever to forget how many years my attachment and devotion have been at your service. Anyhow your caprice is over now and I am resting with the impression that your very pretty letter has made on my mind. . . .

¹ Unpublished letter, No. 58 of M. Ch. de Loménie's collection of letters from M. de Montmorency.

² Letter No. 59 from Mathieu.

"And you, my unfortunate friend, you the sweetest and most inoffensive of all creatures, we can see no end to your woes. Yesterday I went, according to your orders, to see that good little duchess who loves you and who will use all her efforts to be of service to you. The day before she had been to the house of an *illustrious* Caroline, whom you used to know before she had her diadem. She had been to see her a few days before, had spoken to her of Juliette and had been treated kindly, and she had promised to speak of the matter. Her sister (in-law) Hortense also took part in this conversation and an interest in the situation. The former, however, promised to take steps direct. Your friend could not see her yesterday but she will go again, and she has promised me not to give up (*hiatus*) until it is either won or lost. . . . We must await replies before I can give you any advice as to what is to be done in case he should be inflexible. . . . I am quite of the opinion that it would be intolerable to remain where you are. That *Pomme d'Or* (golden apple) is certainly not the garden of Hesperides. I had an idea that you would not be badly off at Toulouse perhaps, as there is always good society there."¹

When the Emperor passed through Châlons, Juliette's friends had hopes for her, but she would not attempt anything.² Mathieu de Montmorency had taken up his abode at Vendôme. Adrien came very near falling a victim to his own delicacy and generosity. At the end of March, 1812, he was sent for by the Minister of Police, who blamed him severely and warned him about his intercourse with the exiles, spoke to him most violently and did not spare him the plainest threats. The Duchesse de Chevreuse was dying at Caen without the least hope of seeing herself freed from exile. In presence of such brutality it was evident that Mme. Récamier had nothing to expect and that she could not

¹ Unpublished letter from Adrien de Montmorency in M. Ch. de Loménié's collection. See a letter dated March 28th in *Mme. R. et les amis de sa jeunesse*, p. 127 and following.

² Copy of Mme. de Staél's letter, No. 170 of M. Ch. de Loménié's MSS. See *Coppet et Weimar*, p. 218. Eug. Ritter proves (*Notes sur Mme. de Staél*, p. 95) that the Emperor must have passed through between the 6th and 12th of November, 1811.

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count "on the generosity of hearts which never relent."¹ The Comtesse de Boigne advised her to go and settle in Vienna,² but she was already arranging about a journey to Italy, as she told Gérard in a letter dated March 27th, 1812.³

Mme. de Staél herself was deciding to leave. Auguste was commissioned to go and tell Mme. Récamier her reasons for this decision.⁴ "I have a horror," wrote Mme. de Staél, "of my present situation, of the harm I have done and may still do to those I love, of my dependence, of my enforced submission which makes me brave what I consider to be dangers, but dangers which, thank Heaven, concern no one but myself. I am quite sure that there is not, in what I feel about this, and in what I have decided, a shade which comes from loving you any the less. I can only compare you with my affection for Benjamin, which has been the most intense of my life."⁵ Auguste de Staél still loved Mme. Récamier and dreaded a journey with his mother.⁶ The departure was finally announced to Juliette in a letter in the following terms: "I am sorry, dear friend, to leave without saying adieu to you. I press you to my heart, and wish you courage in what you believe to be your duty. Everyone's conscience has to decide that, and unhappiness threatens those who brave it. I love you more than you believe, and I say no more because too many sentiments torment me about you two."⁷

Mme. Récamier went to Lyons, where she was invited by her husband's family. A last letter from Mathieu de Montmorency must have reached her at Châlons just as she was leaving.

"VENDÔME, Monday, June 8th, 1812.⁸

"I will take advantage of the first moment I am finally settled at Vendôme, after a few days of reunion with my wife

¹ See the whole of Adrien de Montmorency's beautiful letter dated March 28th, *Mme. R. et les amis de sa jeunesse*, p. 127 and following.

² See *Mme. R. et les amis de sa jeunesse*, p. 121.

³ *Corresp. de F. Gérard*, p. 305.

⁴ Copy of letter No. 171. He did not give her all the reasons. On the 17th of April, 1812, Mme. de Staél became the mother of a male child, Louis-Alphonse de Rocca. Compare P. Gautier, *Mme. de Staél et Napoléon*, pp. 298 and 299. ⁵ Copy of letter No 171. ⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Unpublished letter, No. 177 of M. Ch. de Loménie's MSS.

⁸ See other letters from M. de Montmorency of the same period, in *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 195 and following, p. 204 and following.

and daughter, whom I had not seen for four months, to write to you, sweet friend, and thank you for your letter of the 19th which was brought to me here. I need not tell you what a deep and double interest it had for me. You do not tell me enough about yourself. This is a reproach that several of your letters deserve and that my friendship will never spare you. But to-day you talk to me about a mutual interest very dear to us both, and you are so absolutely taken up with it that I can only share your ideas and sentiments. I should do this all the more freely and with all the more pleasure, if one may use such an expression at the present moment, and anyhow with much more consolation, if the idea of a third person, who is only objectionable as far as I am concerned in this connection, were not always, in my opinion, influencing you. The idea of this annoys me as it does in most of your resolutions, in the choice, for instance, of your present abode, though perhaps I attribute to him a greater share than he really has in your actions. Anyhow I cannot help having this idea. This sentiment seems rather like jealousy ; that will prove to you that there may be some in the purest and truest friendship, but such jealousy as this has nothing personal or selfish about it. . . . If I had not this idea, which I am obliged to own to you frankly, I should have nothing against your present arrangement, although to me personally it means a very great sacrifice, it takes away the hope of seeing you soon and flings a very thick veil over the future chances of our being nearer to each other. Believe me that I fully realize this, but still you will have the usual resources of society and conversation, some very estimable persons of your own family, and that good, kind Camille to whom you at the same time will be a very sweet diversion, after the terrible trial he has just had with the illness of all his family.”¹

Mme. Récamier spent more than eight months at Châlons.

There is a certain interest in the question as to what Benjamin Constant was doing during the year when Mme.

¹ Unpublished letter from M. de Montmorency, No. 60 of M. Ch. de Loménie's collection.

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Récamier and Mathieu de Montmorency had so cruelly fallen victims to their devotion to Mme. de Staél. The letters to Mme. de Nassau allow us to answer this question.¹ At the end of May, 1811, we find him at Basle, attending to his affairs with his father. On the 23rd of August, he writes to his aunt from Hardenberg : "We are at last at the end of our pilgrimage and Charlotte is in the midst of her family, who received us with open arms and with a cordiality such as I had never imagined. I wish I could shake off this shyness which makes me seem cold. You have often reproached me with it, and it wrongs my real feelings when at the bottom of my heart they are made up of gratitude and affection."² He had planned to leave his wife at Hardenberg while he went for a few months to Göttingen to take advantage of the University Library there. He wanted to be by himself in order to give himself up to work. The family Constant had just entered consisted of his brother-in-law and the three daughters of this brother-in-law, one of whom was married to the first Minister of the King of Westphalia, a Frenchman by birth, who had received a great deal from Germany and a German title. With Charlotte, Constant tried to forget the past. In his letter to Mme. de Nassau, dated August 23rd, 1811, he says though : "I will send you in a few days a copy of the arrangement I made with Mme. de Staél."³ Charlotte de Constant writes : "I am leading a perfectly tranquil life here, and I have the happiness of seeing Benjamin contented with his."⁴

Benjamin went to stay at Göttingen.⁵ Before starting he wrote from Hardenberg to his cousin, Charles de Constant : "Fate, which has betrayed me in great things, has been rather favourable to me as regards the small things. A fairly tolerable

¹ See Sainte-Beuve, *Portr. cont.*, V, p. 296 and following, and extracts from the *Carnet de Constant*. Sainte-Beuve, *Causeries du Lundi*, p. 36.

² Unpublished letter (Geneva Library), Mcc. 36.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ The same origin.

⁵ See in the volume by J. H. Menos the letter of November 10th, 1811, dated by mistake December 10th, p. 453, the letter dated by Th. Dufour, December 1811, the letter of January 31st, 1812, that of February 26th, that of March 25th, that of August 21st, etc., and in the MS. Mcc. 36 of Geneva many unpublished letters of that epoch.

situation remains to me of a life that I have not managed skilfully, and I have now arrived at that period of life when one knows that one might be much worse off, and so one contents one's self with things not being better."¹ Constant spent with his wife, at Göttingen, two years "of perfect intimacy and almost absolute solitude."²

Chateaubriand had hitherto been spared by the Emperor, who at times flattered him and at other times was furious with him.³ His election to the Academy in 1811 and the affair which followed, his refusal to write a second speech,⁴ placed him in rather a bad position. He was also struggling with the most embarrassing situation, as he owed about 40,000 francs (£1,600).⁵ On the 4th of September, 1812, he received a letter from the Prefect of Police inviting him to leave Paris, and it was then that he withdrew to Dieppe.⁶ "Bonaparte descends to play the part of a teasing schoolboy."

¹ Unpublished letter dated October 27th, 1811 (Geneva Library, McC. 36a).

² J. H. Menos, *Lettres de B. C. à sa famille*, p. 532. The letter from which this text is taken is dated in the MS. the 7th and not the 8th of November.

³ See *M.O.T.*, III, p. 52.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 556.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 560.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 52 and note 1. *Mme. R. et les amis de sa jeunesse*, p. 406.

CHAPTER XI

STAY AT LYONS AND ITALIAN JOURNEY

(JUNE, 1812—JUNE, 1814)

Ballanche's account.—The Duchesse de Chevreuse and the Duchesse de Luynes at the Hôtel de l'Europe.—Lyons in 1812; the thinkers of Lyons.—Mme. de Sermésy's *salon*.—Cardinal Fesch.—Ballanche is introduced to Mme. Récamier; his *Antigone*.—Mme. de Staél leaves Coppet; her letters to Juliette.—Plans for Italian journey.—The watchfulness of the police.—Mme. Récamier's charity.—Her departure for Italy (February, 1813).—Juliette's impressions about Turin; her letter to Jordan.—A French *salon* in Rome.—Arrival of Ballanche (July, 1813); his brusque departure and his letters.—Mme. Récamier at Naples (December, 1813).—Her intercourse with King Joachim and Queen Caroline.—Mme. Récamier is recalled from exile (April 25th, 1814).—Return to Paris (June 1st, 1814).

SAINTE-BEUVE will serve us once more as a guide in this somewhat artificial division of Mme. Récamier's life. “Before the Benjamin Constant chapter,” he says,¹ “there is one to write on the Italian journey of 1813, the stay at Rome, the intercourse with Canova, the latter's statue, which this time, in order to be ideal, only had to be like the model; then the stay at Naples with Queen Caroline and Murat. The latter, if I am not mistaken, was slightly affected.” Juliette Récamier's stay at Lyons, from July, 1812, until Lent in the year 1813, must be reckoned with the Italian journey. Mme. Lenormant has explained to us the advantages which the exiled woman found in living in her native city. Mme. Delphin was there, M. Récamier's youngest sister, a gay, witty woman, very original, very charitable, and extremely devoted to her sister-in-law's interests.

¹ *Causeries du Lundi*, I, p. 132.

About this stay at Lyons, we could not have a more valuable and sure account than that of Ballanche himself in his unpublished *Biographie de Mme. Récamier*.¹ We will first let him tell us about it :

"At Lyons she found another woman, Mme. de Chevreuse, who was also getting weaker from the weariness of that exile of which she was soon to die. Everyone knows that Bonaparte said when speaking of her, 'She would like to begin over again the Duchesse de Chevreuse of the Fronde, but she has not to deal with a King who is a minor.' Mme. de Chevreuse, I have no need to say, was expiating her generous Opposition. She had refused, according to her own energetic expression, to be 'the jailor of the Queen of Spain,' then being kept in the Château of Compiègne. The Dowager Duchesse de Luynes had given herself up to share the fate of her daughter-in-law, whom she never left until the latter's premature death.²

"They met again, at Lyons, Camille Jordan, who was wasting here noble faculties which circumstances did not permit to develop into a fine talent, and which his patriotism made valueless.

"One of Camille Jordan's friends was at Lyons at this time, entirely taken up with a work by which he was commencing a career, the importance of which he then ignored himself. Camille Jordan was anxious to introduce his friend to the noble exile. The author of *Antigone* did not, up to that time, believe that he could lay claim to any fame. He contented himself with a few studies which took up his leisure time. The Restoration which, by the gift of the Charter, marked the age of emancipation of thought, was to teach M. Ballanche later on that the epopee of *Antigone* was a first grade in a new historical and poetical initiation, of which one could have no idea in those days of general oppression. When he saw Mme. Récamier for the first time, he was at once penetrated by a hitherto unknown charm. It is certain that most of the paintings of *Antigone* gained a great deal by

¹ P. 102 and following.

² The last three phrases are in a note; we are inserting them in the text.

this. He had at this time certain bitter sorrows, which vanished, as though by enchantment, and it was in this way that a lively and animated friendship began, which later on was to prove a sort of inspiration for all his works. . . . Mme. Récamier spent the first part of her time at Lyons in solitude and tears. This was a kind of diversion for her, the only one that could give any alleviation to such a state of dejection and grief."

After this comes Ballanche's account of the visits which Mme. Récamier paid to the Spanish prisoners.

Details which we have elsewhere complete Ballanche's information. The Duchesse de Chevreuse, whom Mme. Récamier met again at the Hôtel de l'Europe,¹ where she was staying, had been banished in 1808, the same year as the Marquis de Bartillac and the Duchesse de Saint-Aignan.² Directly after her exile she had stayed at Caen, as we learn from Adrien de Montmorency's letters.³

Mme. Lenormant has published two notes from the Duchesse de Chevreuse to Mme. Récamier.⁴ There are a few others from her in which the same gracefulness is to be traced, although she was tortured by disease, and was often, as she declares, "so feeble that she could not pronounce a word." "If you have *L'Amour dans le mariage*, you would be very kind to send it to me by the bearer, who will not lose it," she wrote to Mme. Récamier. "I want to have it read to Mme. de M. to whom it will give great pleasure. You will be very good, too, to let me know where you get your flowers. You see I am asking you a quantity of things. It would be too much to add that I should like you to care for me a little, but that would give me great pleasure."⁵ The Duchesse de Chevreuse was in consumption. "She is putting all her courage into dying," writes the Comtesse de Boigne; "it seems easier to her to give up her life than to give up Paris."⁶ Her mother-in-law nursed her with admirable

¹ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 186.

² *Mme. R. et les amis de sa jeunesse*, pp. 399 and 400.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 128-129.—She also went to Italy. See Sismondi's opinion of her. (*Lettres à Mme. d'Albany*, p. 139.)

⁴ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, pp. 188 and 189.

⁵ Letter No. 2 bis in M. Ch. de Loménie's papers.

⁶ *Mme. R. et les amis de sa jeunesse*, p. 71.

tenderness. For a long time afterwards at Lyons¹ people remembered this Duchesse de Luynes, with her masculine bearing, her worried face and loud voice, who, in order to show her contempt for prejudices and customs, went about in the street wearing a long dress with two pockets and a high cap on her head. She was the first to make fun of her own "ungainliness." She was extremely good-hearted, very well educated and so passionately fond of reading that she even printed herself. One day at the Halles de la Grenette, at Messrs. Ballanche's, she was seen composing a plate. She was the mother-in-law of Mathieu de Montmorency and Mme. Récamier could not have found a more trusty friend. The kind Duchesse de Chevreuse, as Ballanche tells us, wanted to know Camille Jordan. The voluntary exile kept among his papers this short note from the charming Hermessinde de Narbonne :

"Mathieu and Adrien de Montmorency, Monsieur, have made me wish very much to meet you. Would it be too indiscreet to ask you to be kind enough to employ a few moments on my behalf? I should be very grateful. I am not at home in the mornings, but in the evening I am always here. Believe me, Monsieur, I should be delighted to have the honour of receiving you.

"NARBONNE-PELET CHEVREUSE.

"*Hôtel d'Europe.*"²

Her intercourse with Jordan was of short duration. Françoise-Marie-Félicité Hermessinde d'Albert Luynes de Chevreuse, née Narbonne-Pelet, died on the 6th of July, 1813, at the age of twenty-eight. She was buried at Lyons in the cemetery of Loyasse.³ Mme. de Luynes watched over her to the very last, yielding to all the invalid's caprices and using all her energy in vain to try to save her.

The city of Lyons, at this epoch, offered more than one intellectual resource to the exiled women. In its literary

¹ See *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 190 and following.

² Unpublished letter in the Boubée collection, Lyons.

³ See the *Cimetière de Loyasse*, by P. Lyons, 1834. (Library of the City of Lyons, No. 304, 103.)

history (if we except the famous years of the sixteenth century, when, thanks to the efforts of its printers, to the bold initiative of its poets, to the sympathy of foreigners with its spirit of liberty, it was truly the intellectual capital of France¹) there have been few periods which have done it as much honour as this first quarter of the nineteenth century, when it gave shelter and a calmness favourable to meditation to men of talent, to whose admirable attitude of mind was added a most scrupulous moral dignity. In 1804, Benjamin Constant, who had come to Lyons to meet Mme. de Staël there, was very severe in his criticism of the place. "This city," he writes in his *Journal intime*,² "seems to me to unite the dulness of the small commercial towns of Germany with all the insipidness of the little provincial towns of France. It is Frankfort minus the intercourse with foreign countries, and consequently the interest of political news. It is Leipzig, minus intercourse with the literary world and the heavy but instructive conversations of the professors." This rapid criticism was not a just one and, better than anyone else, Constant, so clever when he liked in discovering the interesting side of persons and things, might have seen that this apparent *panthéisme*, to use a word of Renan's, concealed active and silent energies. The *Correspondance des deux Ampère*, even in the abridged form in which it is published, makes us respect these modest thinkers of Lyons, united to each other by a touching solidarity, not anxious to make any public stir and, when necessary, ready to sacrifice themselves for the benefit of those great writers who have often made use of their work, sometimes even without acknowledging it. Camille Jordan, in the retreat into which his scruples had driven him, was at this epoch one of the best informed men on all that concerned the history of Germany, and Mme. de Staël's great work owes much no doubt to his erudition, if we are to judge by the letters exchanged between Camille and his friend. As to Ballanche, that delicious writer in whom scarcely anything was wanting of what goes to make the great poet or the great philosopher, it has not

¹ These are the words of M. Brunetiére, *Manuel d'Histoire de la littérature française*.

² Edit. Melegari, p. 90.

yet been told what Chateaubriand owed to him.¹ The *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe* opened many horizons in this direction. They should be extended and the relation should be studied more closely than hitherto between the *Génie du Christianisme* and the work published by Ballanche, in 1808, under the title: *Du sentiment considéré dans ses rapports avec la littérature et les arts*.

Of all the centres frequented by these men who would not have liked too much stir, the *salon* of Mme. de Sermésy,² a niece of M. Simonard's, was the one most in vogue. This wealthy widow, who liked receiving at her house, together with Ballanche and Jordan, the painters Revoil and Richard, Artaud, Dugas-Montbel, seems to have had a certain talent herself as a sculptress. She was said to know the ancient languages and to speak several modern ones. She had taken from Byron's works the subjects for a large number of little groups which she executed in terra cotta. She gave a statue of Psyche to the Museum of her city and to the Lyons Academy one of Plato, for which she was admitted as a member. She had done busts of Camille Jordan and of Dugas-Montbel, the translator of Homer. At the age of eighty-one the indefatigable Mme. de Sermésy was still modelling. Her studio was devastated in 1815, when the Bellecour houses were pillaged.³ During Mme. Récamier's stay in Lyons she often went to this *salon*, as Mme. de Sermésy's letters to the painter Fleury Richard prove.⁴

Cardinal Fesch, too, was at Lyons. He had been living quietly in his diocese ever since that Council of 1810, at which he had opposed his nephew. He had become the natural protector and aid of exiles and protesters. According to a tradition reported by one of the first of Juliette's biographers,⁵ the little group met at a weekly dinner at the

¹ See, however, V. Giraud's article, *Pour le centenaire du Génie du Christianisme, Étude sur les relations littéraires de Ballanche et de Chateaubriand* (*La Quinzaine*, April 16th, 1902).

² *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 191 and following.

³ *Revue du Lyonnais*, New Series, I, II, p. 421.

⁴ *Une page de la vie lyonnaise*, by E. Richard, p. 11 and following.

⁵ Rondelet, *Éloge de Mme. Récamier*, p. 124. In a letter dated September 18th, 1812, Cardinal Fesch exposed his new habits of life, (Library of the City of Lyons, in a copy of Monfalcon's, IV, Catalogue Desverny et Molinier, No. 1795.)

Archbishop's residence, and Juliette was either there or else she arrived later on in the evening.

But the event which, during her few months' stay at Lyons, was no doubt of the greatest interest and importance to Mme. Récamier, was the acquaintance she made of a man who was to be her life-long friend. "It was at Lyons in 1812," says V. de Laprade,¹ "that Ballanche, under the auspices of his friend Camille Jordan, met for the first time *the woman who seemed to him like a living apparition of Beatrice*. It is thus that he describes her in the dedication of the *Palingénésie*, a masterpiece of delicate sentiment and of beautiful style. He found immutable peace, an unchangeable security for his heart in that noble affection which filled his life and which was to spread its rays over his deathbed, like a sweet and serene presage of the regions of love and grace which were to open to his infinite hopes."

As Laprade points out, it was Camille Jordan who arranged this meeting. Jordan saw Juliette very often, and she had no more sure confidant.² In the leisure time that his family affections and his translation of Klopstock left him, he was at her service. It was of her that he wrote to their mutual friend de Vogt. The Baron, who was pursuing his economic studies in Paris, sending memoirs to the Ministers and begging for audiences in order to set forth his views about the happiness of mankind, advised Jordan to have Juliette to stay with his family. On the 18th of June he writes: "Wenn ihre Damen besser sind, könnten sie nicht Juliette einmal acht oder 14 Tage bei sich wohnen lassen? Oder würde das Eifersucht erregen? Dann müssen Sie es nicht."³ Jordan did better than this. He was very anxious to keep Juliette from making undesirable friends and to find her satisfactory ones. He had succeeded in ridding her of a certain Englishwoman, Lady Webb, who had met Mme. Récamier formerly at Lyons and who proposed nothing less than "to give up her lover for such a friend."⁴ He spoke to Juliette most enthusiastically

¹ *Ballanche*, p. 22.

² See *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 193 and following.

³ Unpublished letter in the Boubée collection, Lyons.

⁴ In an unpublished passage of the letter from Jordan, published by Mme. Lenormant. (*Mme. R. et les amis de sa jeunesse*, p. 45 and following.)

of the philosopher, Ballanche,¹ made her first read what had appeared of the *Fragments*, and then introduced the author in person.

At that date, Ballanche was thirty-six years of age, as he was born at Lyons August 4th, 1776. He was scarcely known except for having printed the second and third editions of the *Génie du Christianisme*, published in 1800 his work on *Sentiment*, and composed the *Fragments*, which had been inspired by an unhappy love-affair. According to Guizot,² "he was ugly, of poor rank, unknown, usually silent and awkward to such a degree that he was sometimes embarrassing, all his merits were concealed under an uncouth or strange-looking exterior, and were only revealed in his writings or in absolute intimacy." Sainte-Beuve, in an article of the *Portraits contemporains*,³ tells about the different stages of his literary formation before the meeting with Mme. Récamier. Ballanche scarcely belonged to the romantic school, in the sense in which that was to be understood later on.⁴ He was rather one of those Lyonese metaphysicians so well described by M. A. France in his study of Barthélemy Tisseur.⁵ Their ideas are enveloped in a mist which sometimes makes them quite obscure, and it is certainly not the pure tradition of French genius which guides them. To make up for this they have profound originality and poetry, a poetry that is penetrating and sweet runs through the meanderings of their thought, softens the shades of their language. One does not always understand them, but one is often charmed. There is something of Maurice Scève about them and they have, Ballanche more than the others, a certain air of relationship with the philosopher-poets or the poet-philosophers of Germany.

Affected by this *Sehnsucht* or this mysticism, Ballanche had intended giving himself up to the ecclesiastical state. He announced this idea of his to André-Marie Ampère in July,

¹ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 198.

² Article quoted about Mme. Récamier, p. 527.

³ II, as far as page 20.

⁴ See in *La Quinzaine*, March 16th, 1902, the article by A. Prat, *le Romantisme de Ballanche*.

⁵ *Vie littéraire*, III, p. 197. Compare Laprade, *Éloge de Ballanche*, p. 16.

1805,¹ and about the same time he wrote him the following letter, which will prepare us for understanding what his intercourse with Mme. Récamier meant to him. "Fortunately for me I am extremely busy, and I shun like the plague all that could take me from my work. I have no society here which suits me as there is no one with whom I can let myself go. . . . You advised me to marry ; I myself wished to do so, but I tremble at the thought of the future before me when I marry. I should have moments of frightful solitude, because if one does not tell everything to the person with whom one is to spend one's life there is no happiness possible. Then too, children and all the rest. As a bachelor it is easy to consume one's existence, but as a husband and father it is very different."² Towards 1809, Ballanche had wanted to marry a young girl of Languedoc, who was then sixteen. She wrote the account which Sainte-Beuve knew of a pilgrimage to Mont-Cindre near Lyons.³ He had given up the idea of this union with great sorrow as business complications had made it impossible, and from that time forth had consoled himself with literature. Ever since 1808, the Ballanches, father and son, used to have the meetings of the *Société littéraire* of Lyons at their house. Later on, in the year 1814, this Society was installed in the Palais des Arts.⁴ It was at one of these meetings, January 12th, 1809, that the philosopher read the prose story entitled *Mort d'un Philosophe platonicien*.⁵

Ampère, Ballanche and Jordan, were always together. The diary, some of which has been published, of one of their confidants who was a native of Lyons, Claude-Julien Bredin, proves this intimacy. On the 8th of April, 1811, Bredin writes : "Dinner with Ampère, Ballanche, Dupré, and Camille Jordan. The latter read us part of his work on Klopstock in the evening. It is a monument worthy of the sublime poet, of the divine singer of the *Redemption*." On the 9th of May, he writes : "I went this evening with my friend to

¹ *Corr. des Ampère*, I, p. 20.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 18 and 19. Letter dated from Lyons, 13th Floreal, 1805.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 64 and following.

⁴ *Notice sur la Soc. litt. de Lyons*, by G. Bellin. Lyons Library, No. 364,705. ⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

Camille's country-place. In that pretty valley, Ampère and I maintained against him and Ballanche the unlimited freedom of the human soul, the spontaneity of will and of pure love. I declared to Ballanche that Fénelon had been unjustly condemned.¹ On the 9th of July, 1812, Ballanche read to the Lyons Literary Society the beginning of the first book of the *Antigone* he was composing. "The object of our *confrère*," said the minutes, "has been to unite in a framework all that poets, and even historians, tell us of the misfortunes of this celebrated woman and of those of her family, and to compose on them, if we may be allowed to express it thus, a kind of poem in prose which shall retrace with scrupulous fidelity the events, often marvellous and incredible, of the heroic age in which Oedipus and his children lived."² It was in the midst of these literary preoccupations that Ballanche was introduced to Mme. Récamier. "He gave himself up to her from the first day without ever telling her so."³ From that very first meeting, which was to be followed by so long an intimacy, Ballanche had one idea firmly fixed in his mind. He wanted Mme. Récamier to work, to have her mind occupied. This is the sense of the first note he sent her :

"Counting on having the honour of seeing you this evening I did not send you the Bible. It is nine o'clock, and I see that it is impossible to call on you. I am therefore deciding to send you the book I promised, although it is late, rather than leave you without it any longer. Accept the assurance, Madame, of my affectionate and respectful devotion.—P.S. I have been idle to-day, but all day I thought that you had been working well, for you know you have been rather idle, and you must make up for lost time. It is true that you have been ill. I hope that you are well and that you are working a little."⁴ The introduction and the first visits were accompanied by interesting details which have been related by Mme. Lenormant.⁵ The story of Ballanche's shoes has been

¹ *Corr. des Ampère*, I, p. 75 and following.

² *Notice hist. sur la Soc. lit.*, pp. 10 and 11.

³ Sainte-Beuve, *Causeries du Lundi*, I, p. 131.

⁴ Unpublished letter signed Ballanche fils, and addressed Madame Récamier, Hôtel de l'Europe. M. Ch. de Loménie's collection.

⁵ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, 199 and following.

repeated many times. The philosopher read Juliette his *Antigone*, which from thenceforth he was to complete under her inspiration.¹

Mme. de Staël, whom Mme. Récamier intended to go to see from Lyons, had suddenly taken an energetic resolution and had left Coppet.

During her long journeys she did not forget her dear Juliette.² On the 5th of July she wrote to her from Wadowice, in Galicia.³ On the 10th of July, she wrote a very touching letter to recommend Auguste to her. "May he see you and see me again," she says; "I count on you for making his life more agreeable now and for bringing him back to me when that is necessary. You are a heavenly creature, and if I had lived with you I should have been happy. Fate drags me away. Adieu. Try to write to me. It makes me weep when I see your handwriting."⁴ After the letter from Galicia, Mme. de Staël was some time without writing either to Juliette, Mathieu, or anyone but her son Auguste. Mme. Récamier complained of this and, on the 29th of September,⁵ Mme. de Staël answered her as follows from Stockholm: "Dear friend, you wrote me quite a long time ago a letter which I only received yesterday, and in this letter you doubt my affection for you. I cannot tell you how much this doubt hurt me, for to believe I do not love you is to misunderstand me. It is not an ordinary friendship this of mine with you. There is a kindred spirit and there are our tears to unite us, and a sister could not be dearer to me than you are. My angel, do not offend me again by not understanding me in my intercourse with you, you who understand me so thoroughly

¹ Sainte-Beuve, *Portr. cont.*, II, p. 20.

² In Galiffe's *D'un siècle à l'autre*, 2nd part, Geneva, 1878, p. 308 and following, there is a very interesting account, which is dated, of Mme. de Staël's travels in Russia and Sweden.

³ This letter is published almost in full in *Coppet et Weimar*, p. 230 and following. No. 179 of M. Ch. de Loménié's MSS. *Lettres de Mme. de Staël*. It is quoted by Ballanche (*Biog. de Mme. R.*, pp. 108 and 109).

⁴ No. 175 of M. Ch. de Loménié's MSS. Autograph letter, most of which is published in *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 207. Quoted by Ballanche in *Biog. de Mme. R.*, p. 101.

⁵ Eug. Ritter in *Notes sur Mme. de Staël*, p. 96, states that Mme. de Staël arrived at St. Petersburg in the middle of August, 1812, and that on the 16th of September she was at Abo, in Finland.

in everything else. . . . I beg you on my knees not to doubt my soul, as if I have one it belongs to you.”¹

On the 18th of October, there is another long letter of three pages which Mme. de Stael wrote from Stockholm.² She was expecting her son and, after begging Mme. Récamier to send him to her, she adds: “Ah, if I were never to be with you again in the city where I met you, it would be all the same to me to die sooner or later, but I cannot give up that hope. That is a life to come³ for me on this earth. Have you received my letter in which I told you what emotion yours caused me? It was the first you had written me since my departure. Since then I have only received one in which you complain of my silence. Ah, if you only knew what that time was for me when I did not write, and what I would have given then for a moment’s conversation with you. As for that, I would give my very blood any day for such happiness. I think of you often and with passionate affection. It seems to me that you are of quite another nature from everyone else on earth, and that your face was given to you to prove it.”⁴

Mme. Récamier also wrote to Albertine. She did not conceal her sadness and Mme. de Stael tried to comfort her. “In this world,” she wrote her, “everything is more powerful than each one of us. We must wait then. Do as I do, pray to the Heaven where I sometimes think I see your beautiful eyes answering me.”⁵ Mme. de Stael did not forget Camille Jordan, and she asked her “chosen sister” to remember her to Mme. de Luynes and to “her interesting daughter-in-law.”⁶ The traveller’s health suffered in these climates too severe for her; but she was above all troubled to find that the situation of Juliette and that of Mathieu were not modified in the least.⁷

¹ Autograph letter No. 180 of M. Ch. de Loménié’s MSS. Some parts of it are published in *Coppet et Weimar*, p. 238 and following. The letter is only dated September 29th, without any indication of place.

² The beginning of this letter is published in *Coppet et Weimar*, pp. 241 and 242.

³ Doubtful.
⁴ Unpublished fragment of the autograph letter of October 18th, No. 181 of the MSS.

⁵ Unpublished autograph letter of December 18th, No. 182 of M. Ch. de Loménié’s MSS.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

Auguste de Staél had joined his mother. On the 17th of May, 1813, the latter wrote from Stockholm announcing her plan of going to America.¹ She was always distressed at the separation from her friend, to whom she wrote as follows:—
 “ Ah, I think of you all the time, and I would give half of the rest of my life to spend the other half with you. If you have not become indifferent as far as I am concerned, and if there is any place on earth where I could be with you I will come. I admire the country where I am now staying, but at my age it is impossible to get accustomed to a fresh abode. My heart is in the past. . . . ”²

Mathieu de Montmorency had his suspicions about the motive which had made Mme. Récamier decide to settle in Lyons. On the other hand, Mme. de Staél’s brusque determination did not fail to touch him. “ My loss,” he wrote to Juliette on the 25th of June, 1812, “ is a very real one. It had, so to speak, already commenced, and this meeting again followed by an almost compulsory separation was a perfect torture. Her position, too, was a subject of such sad thought. It was a deceptive appearance of rest with fresh anxieties every instant. I scarcely ever heard her spoken of without its being painful to me.”³ Mathieu de Montmorency feared for Juliette what he termed “ bad friendships.”⁴ These fears, united to his wish to see an unhappy friend once more, took him to Lyons towards the end of January, 1813. It was he who encouraged Mme. Récamier to start for Italy, in order that she should escape certain agitations which even at Lyons might interfere with her peace.⁵

Gradually Mme. Récamier was converted to this idea. The Prefect of the Rhône, on whose sympathy she believed she could count, had, it appears, let her understand that she must not expect anything from him in the way of alleviation

¹ Unpublished autograph letter of the 17th of May. No. 184 of M. Ch. de Loménie’s MSS.

² Unpublished autograph letter of August 25th. No. 183 of M. Ch. de Loménie’s MSS.

³ Letter No. 61 of M. Ch. de Loménie’s collection, published in part in *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 195 and following.

⁴ Letter No. 63, published in part in *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 204, and following.

⁵ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 215. *Mme. R. et les amis de sa jeunesse*, p. 135.

of her situation.¹ The great majority of the inhabitants of the City of Lyons were Imperialists who were grateful to Napoleon for all that he had done in restoring their city, and raising it from its ruins.² The operations of the police were therefore very harassing with regard to persons who were suspected and those who were in opposition to the Government, if we are to judge by the rare papers preserved in the archives of the Rhône department.³ When Juliette established herself with her niece at Lyons, M. Récamier wrote to her recommending the strictest prudence.⁴ "Be careful about the persons with whom you make friends," he says, "for although it may not appear to be so, you will always be watched by the police. Your change or your move from Châlons to Lyons has put you into another division of the Police General. I happen to have a friend in this new division, and I met him by accident the other day on the Boulevards. He told me that two reports about you had already been received from Lyons; the first one to announce your arrival there, and the second to say that you were conducting yourself very well, that you saw very few people and stayed a great deal at home. . . ."

M. Récamier had every reason for his distrust. The Emperor's "Black Cabinet" opened the letters addressed to the exiles, copied them, and forwarded the copies to the Police Department. It was in this way that, in a stock of letters kept in the archives of the Prefecture of Police and burnt in 1871, with the exception of a few packets, one of which relates to General Mallet's exploit, the copy of one of M. Récamier's letters was found and Mme. Récamier's reply dated October 28th, 1812.⁵

Considering this police surveillance there was some merit in offering Mme. Récamier, either from near or from afar, any mark of sympathy. The Marquis de Catellan and the future Duc d'Harcourt came and called on her. The Duc d'Abrantès,

¹ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 207.

² See A. Metzger. *Lyon sous le Directoire, le Consulat, et l'Empire*. Lyons, Georg., p. 60 and following. ³ Series M.

⁴ See *Mme. R. et les amis de sa jeunesse*, p. 167 and following.

⁵ *Intermédiaire des chercheurs*, 1897, I, pp. 129-130, or 1899, I, pp. 821-822.

when passing through Lyons, did not attempt to find any excuse which would exempt him from paying his homage to the banished woman.¹ In the fourteenth volume of her interminable *Mémoires*,² the Duchesse d' Abrantès tells of this visit. A screen divided Juliette's room into smaller ones. By way of entertaining herself she was working at some embroidery. She had a piano, some pencils, embroidery frames, and books. Every now and then she went out on to the balcony in her white dress, without any hat. By way of giving her pleasure Mme. d' Abrantès played the accompaniment for Mme. Doumerc of a song by Boieldieu on some words written by Longchamp, when the Directory had sent him to America as an exile.

Beside her correspondence and the visits she received and paid, Juliette Récamier had scarcely any other diversion at Lyons than the exercise of charity. Mme. Lenormant often speaks of her aunt's delight in benevolent work,³ and we must acknowledge that she does not exaggerate at all. Kind-heartedness was, whatever may have been said, one of the most distinctive traits of Mme. Récamier's character. "Nothing is more rare," says La Rochefoucauld, "than true kindheartedness, those even who think they have it have usually only complaisance or weakness." Mme. Récamier's charity was disinterested, active, and sometimes even imprudent. In the letter of which we have already quoted a fragment, her husband writes the following rather comic phrases:⁴ "Beware of excess in the alms-giving and generosity to which you will naturally be incited by the scenes of poverty which she (Mme. Delphin) will put before you daily, because I do a great deal here myself, and one should not go beyond reasonable limits in anything." Mme. Récamier must have smiled at this appeal to reason from the pen of a man who had never hesitated about the worst extravagances provided that he benefited by them. She took a little English girl, about whom she had been told, away

¹ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 210.

² P. 363 and following . . . See the book of the *Cent et un*, vol. quoted, p. 356 and following.

³ In *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 212 and following.

⁴ *Mme. R. et les amis de sa jeunesse*, p. 168.

from some acrobats.¹ She had her educated and brought her up for the most part at her own expense. It is no doubt to this that the following fragment of a letter refers, which was written by Mme. Récamier after her departure from Lyons to Mme. Delphin : ". . . . an English book ; if he has not one, let him buy one for her, so that she can read a few pages every day. A well-brought up girl, who works well and knows two languages can always find a good situation as governess if she has not enough money to establish herself otherwise. It is very possible, too, that Mme. de Gramont might take her when her apprenticeship finishes, to be with her daughter, as she might like to have her daughter taught English and French from the time she learns to talk, as is so often done in Paris now. And it would be a great loss to Marianne to give up talking her own language. I am convinced that we shall have great satisfaction with this girl. The person with whom you have placed her will bring her up well, I am sure, and make a good Catholic of her, and I shall be very glad to have contributed in giving this soul to God. When her board is due, Mme. de Cat. will pay the other quarter. Have you done anything for her sister ? I was so worried the last day before I left that I very wrongly did not attend to it, but on my return to Lyons we will see what can be done if you have not already seen to it, for you are so good and so zealous that you never neglect a good work"²

At the time she wrote this letter, Mme. Récamier had already left Lyons. She was much regretted in her native city. On the 8th of July, 1813, the Literary Society of Lyons met to hear M. Monperlier read an epistle to Mme. Récamier in verse. "This epistle," says M. Breghot in the minutes, "contains touching regrets about the exile of this lady which our *confrère* complains of not being able to share. He praises her grace and her kindness, and dedicates to her his esteem and admiration. The Club expresses to M. Monperlier the pleasure it has felt in hearing these verses."³ Mme. Récamier started for Italy at the beginning of Lent, 1813.

¹ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 213.

² M. Ch. de Loménie's MSS. (Papers attached to Mme. Lenormant's letters).

³ *Notice historique sur la Soc. litt. de Lyon*, pp. 12 and 13.

She took her niece and a maid with her, and M. de Montmorency accompanied her as far as Chambéry. She travelled in her own carriage and took with her some books chosen by Ballanche, among others the *Génie du Christianisme* and Michaud's *Histoire des Croisades*. At Turin the travellers went to the house of M. Auguste Pasquier, Administrator of the Customs, and younger brother of the Prefect of Police.¹ M. Pasquier found a travelling companion for Mme. Récamier, a very learned German, M. Marschall, a botanist, of whom later on she always had a very pleasant remembrance.²

From Turin, on the 26th of March, 1813, Juliette Récamier wrote her impressions to the faithful Camille Jordan. This letter is the longest that has been kept of hers. Sainte-Beuve published the first part of it,³ from Jordan's papers. Mme. Lenormant reproduced this fragment.⁴ We have found and give herewith the latter part of the letter. Mme. Récamier had felt very sad when she crossed Mont Cenis. On arriving at Turin she felt so unwell that she thought she was going to be ill. Gradually she revived, began to observe, and felt already the moral influence of Italy. Her remarks about Turin society are piquant and prove that she had a broad way of looking at things. After making fun of the solemn little Court of the Borghèse Prince and of that mania for display which reigned in Piedmontese society, its love for the superfluous and its disdain for the necessaries, she adds :

“The Prince leads the most retired life, except for the hours of display. He spends all his time shut up alone in his Palace. This seclusion has lasted for two years. It has been noticed that all this time the shutters of the last rooms in his abode were always kept closed. Only one valet ever goes into these rooms, which are every day adorned with fresh flowers,⁵ and decorated in the most elegant way. It is affirmed that a charming young person lives in this profound seclusion and that she has been seen through one of the

¹ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 216.

² *Ibid.*, p. 217 and following.

³ Article quoted on *Mme. de Staél et Jordan*.

⁴ *Mme. R. et les amis de sa jeunesse*, p. 139 and following.

⁵ Here begins the fragment which we found in M. de Loménie's papers.

shutters. The history of this beautiful invisible one occupies the imagination of the Piedmontese and gives rise to plenty of commentaries. If only M. de Lameth were here, but he is absent.

“The Comte looks after me with a solicitude which I should not have expected. He comes twice a day and has found me a very suitable travelling companion as far as Rome. The solitariness in which he sees me makes him very sorry for me. He spoke of it to M. de Cavour (?), formerly Marquis and now Baron, and he offered his children’s tutor who had intended going to Rome. This man is very well educated and very simple. He knows Italy thoroughly, has letters of introduction to the savants, and undertakes not only to show me all that is curious but also to acquaint me with all the little material details of the journey. M. de Cavour came himself to talk about it with me and has been very kind about all the arrangements.

“I have received your second letter, dear Camille, and am furious with it. How is it possible that a superior man like you can amuse yourself with listening to and repeating all the chit-chat of a little town? I have not talked to anyone about my stay at Lyons, except as I have talked to you of it. Then, too, I was so pleased with my stay at Lyons that I intend returning there in June, and it is certainly the only city in France that I should care to live in after Paris. I do not know what you mean about my confidences and the *blasé* state that is imputed to me. I was unfortunately far away, too far, as you know.

“As to religious opinions, you know that in many respects mine are more like yours than Mathieu’s and that at the same time I think, like you, that a perfect belief without instruction is a surer guide for a fragile being. About that then we all agree. Leave these wretched worries alone, as they are unbearable at a distance. I was delighted with your first letter, and I am quite out of patience with the second. I must have a third one then quickly, for I like you too much, and have too much affection and esteem for you, to endure the very faintest cloud between us. I commend myself to your sweet Julie to put matters right between us. Tell Mme. de Luynes

and M. Ballanche the details I have given you about my plans. Adieu, bad friend. Adieu, adieu. I am very fond of you, and I miss you. I think of you, of Julie and of Caroline. It seems to me that part of my heart stayed with you all. I am going to take care of myself and to observe everything thoroughly, so that I may come back to you amiable and well. At Turin I had two nervous attacks, such as I have never had before. I am going to write to M. Ballanche, from whom I have had two charming letters."

As we see, the restricted speed of the journey allowed Mme. Récamier time to look round and to reflect. She passed through Alexandria, Parma, Plaisance, Modena, Bologna and reached Rome in the Passion week.¹ She had now arrived at the end of this journey which, the year before, her friend, the Comtesse de Boigne, had earnestly advised her not to take, under the pretext that "society and conversation" were "null" in Italy, and that art, even in so beautiful a country, would not suffice for the imagination and heart of an unhappy woman.²

In Rome, Juliette Récamier stayed at Serni's, Place d'Espagne.³ Rome was the capital of the department of the Tiber and M. de Tournon was Prefect there. Norvins was at the head of the police,⁴ and General Miollis commanded the French troops. Mme. Récamier was invited to the house of the Governor, the Prefect, and the "Administrator of Police." She met Werner, the author of *Attila* and of *Luther*, then in all the fervour of his conversion to Catholicism. She also met M. de Chabot, a friend of Mathieu de Montmorency and as devout as he was; Millin, the archæologist, for whom she did not care much. Norvins knew Camille Jordan and proved to be an intelligent man. "He has let me see," writes Mme. Récamier, "some of his writings which show talent; but there is in him a mixture of the old and new régime, which constantly surprises me. He

¹ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 218.

² *Mme. R. et les amis de sa jeunesse*, p. 122.

³ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 218.

⁴ About Norvins and the Spanish Princes in Rome (1811-1813). See the article by Geoffroy de Grandmaison (*Revue des questions-historiques*, Jan 1st, 1901.)

is sometimes M. de Narbonne, and the next minute Regnaud de Saint-Jean d'Angély." With General Miollis Juliette tried to talk of Mme. de Staél. "I spoke to him of *Corinne*," she says. "He could not imagine what I meant, and thought it was an Italian town which he did not know."¹

Mme. Récamier had much to say in praise of the old banker, Torlonia, Duc de Bracciano, who often received her in his sumptuous palace on the Corso. At the end of a month she herself took the first floor of the Fiano Palace on the Corso, and opened her *salon* to the French in Rome. M. d'Ormesson, the fascinating Baron de Forbin, the painter Granet and Norvins also went regularly to see her.² Gradually the social life which was so dear to her was reconstituted around her.

"She was also able to satisfy that need of religious emotion which has so much power and charm," says Ballanche.³ "Those who have seen Rome and lived the veritable Roman life know how much the ceremonies of religious worship lay hold of the faculties which produce the passionate love of art. This city, though the metropolis of souvenirs, was at that time the widow of her sovereign pontiff, and it will readily be understood all that must have been wanting in the grand and solemn expressions of Catholic religion. The French authorities sought as much as they could to make this immense void, this pompous solitude caused by the absence of unity, disappear. There was always a sort of indescribable mourning in all the fêtes."

In spite of Ballanche's declarations it must not be imagined that Juliette's stay in Rome was gloomy and sad. She had more than one resource by way of diversion. Mme. Lenormant has told us⁴ how she went to visit the studio of Canova, who received her with his paper cap in his hand, introduced his brother the Abbé to her, and from that day forth had the most sincere friendship for her. Every day a note from Canova "came to bring good wishes" to Juliette, and every day, too, a sonnet came with it from the Abbé to the

¹ All these details are from a letter to Camille Jordan dated April 21st, 1813. (*Mme. R. et les amis de sa jeunesse*, p. 141 and following).

² *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 219 and following.

³ *Biogr. de Mme. R.*, p. 116. ⁴ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 222 and following.

“bellissima Zulietta.” Since his installation at Rome Canova had never gone away, except for two visits to France in 1802 and 1809. He was a member of the section of Beaux-Arts of the Institute, and was extremely fond of France. According to Mme. Récamier’s first biographer,¹ she met more than one of her compatriots at his house, and among others the Comte d’Estournel who, when speaking of Juliette, wrote as follows :

“If I had seen her at the age when one goes wild I should have lost my head, but I am only seeing her at the age when one becomes foolish, and that will save me.” Canova was one of Juliette’s most faithful friends whilst she was in Italy. When she left Rome for Naples he gave her a charming letter for the Archbishop of Taranto, the text of which Ballanche transcribes in his *Biographie de Mme. Récamier*.

Ballanche himself had been too keenly affected by his meeting with Juliette not to want to go to see her in a country which, for its own sake, was so tempting to his curiosity. Ever since she had left Lyons he had never ceased corresponding with her and encouraging her. In a letter of February 1813, a fragment of which Mme. Lenormant has quoted, he says to her :

“ You know I could not understand your coquetry or that which you call by this name, for I do not believe in it yet. As a matter of fact no one has ever had less need to be coquettish, just as no one has ever had less need to be beautiful. In my opinion, therefore, your coquetry is simply thrown away because you are so beautiful, and the Creator might very well have made you less beautiful, since He had decided to give you so liberally that which can best take the place of beauty. Forgive me, Madame, this light tone, for I do not want to joke about it. At bottom this is a very serious idea, it is only the expression of it which is wrong. It is that word coquetry which I used, I do not know why, and it has spoilt everything. If I did not count so thoroughly on your indulgence I would re-write my letter in order to omit that bad phrase.”²

¹ Rondelet, *Éloge de Mme. R.*, pp. 125-126.

² Unpublished letter in M. Ch. de Loménie’s collection.

Juliette accused herself then readily enough of coquetry, but Ballanche was scarcely deceived by it and, under her apparent frivolity which was merely a grace, he had soon discovered the kindness and that indulgent affection which made up the charm of Mme. Récamier. She had wanted to console the man who called himself an "exile from happiness," and he, in his turn, wanted to return some of the good that he had received from her. There is nothing in this sentiment which could have wounded the most susceptible delicacy. It was, as he affirmed, the affection "of a brother for a sister,"¹ a devotion "complete and without reserve." He adds, "Your health, although you do not suspect this, is very dear to me, and to know your itinerary is indispensable to me. I want to let you know my ideas and plans one after the other, since you are kind enough to reckon them in your own plans. My destiny will get clearer and my life will arrange itself under your happy influence. You cannot understand [the difficulties I have had this month. I have had anxiety about money matters, and I am not wealthy enough to be able to trust to luck in these affairs. This is what has made my position so embarrassing, and I have never felt so thoroughly the value of independence. I should so much like to only sacrifice my liberty to my affections, and not to circumstances."² Ballanche was working at his *Antigone*. He was trying to make her "a little like" his friend.

He arrived in Rome, after travelling night and day, to stay a week.³ He saw the Coliseum and St. Peter's with Mme. Récamier, accompanied by Canova. "To the little group whom he met in her *salon*, he read the end of his *Antigone*, the funeral scene. When the poem appeared the following year, in the midst of the pomps and ceremonies of the Restoration, a general sentiment endeavoured to recognize in it an orphan Princess, the daughter of kings. Such is the fate of a poet's works, they are modified according to diverse perspectives. His own thought changes whilst he is writing it, and when he thinks he has completed it those who read it change

¹ Same letter, *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 202. See on this subject a few charming phrases by Scherer, *Etudes*, V., p. 89.

² The same letter of Feb. 1813. Unsigned. Unpublished fragment in M. Ch. de Loménie's collection.

³ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 229.

it and complete it again."¹ Before leaving Rome he wrote the beautiful *Fragment* which he inserted later on in the first volume of his works.² He paid his *Adieux* to the city illustrious among all cities. "Ah," he exclaimed, "if a voyage is a sad but perfect image of life, does not my departure resemble death? . . . Poetry and the arts no longer offer me anything but feeble delights, they have lost all power to divert and elate me. My life has taken refuge in my affections and they alone now can make me enjoy and suffer. . . ."

Ballanche had only arrived a few days when his father sent for him back.³ It caused him the keenest grief to leave. With that sincerity which was the characteristic of his nature, he could not now cease thinking of this woman whom a year before he had not known.

He had a tendency to low spirits, and solitude weighed heavily on him. He comforted himself by writing to his excellent friend, for in these intervals of melancholy he did not know what to do, caring little for reading, and not knowing how to divert himself.

"The sight of Nature in its beauty, or of a monument," he says, in a letter, dated July 10th, 1813, "is a mechanical movement of the eyes, and work for my thoughts.⁴ I cannot start on anything. I wish I could rid my life of these moments of emptiness and weariness. I am between Rome and Lyons; it seems to me that I am outside my own existence. I cannot find anything in myself, not only which suffices for me, but which helps me to pass the time. Poor, wretched creature that I am! Those days at Rome are over, they will never come again. Why can I not begin them once more? If only I knew that you were in a place of tranquillity, taking to things in life, and smiling at its diversions! But I have too much reason to believe that you, too, feel a weight that wearies you. I can see you on the sad-looking terrace of that sad palace you inhabit, a veritable place of

¹ Sainte-Beuve. *Portr. cont.*, II, pp. 20-21.

² P. 34 and following. . . . Compare his *Biogr. de Mme. R.*, p. 118 and following.

³ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 230.

⁴ Mme. Lenormant (*Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 231) by mistake puts "fatigue for my thoughts."

exile! The need of devoting yourself to some one is consuming you. You have not anyone to whom you can consecrate your thoughts, deeds, and your entire existence. You would love to sacrifice your tranquillity and your happiness. You have no one to whom you could make this sacrifice of any use. You, too, are consuming yourself in solitude.

"Truly, I should like to be able to put your friendship to the test. This would do you good and it would do me good too, and a great deal of good. It is not that I have any need of this test, but because I should feel that I had been of use to you in making you develop what there is within you of generosity and devotion. I should in this way enjoy the noblest part of you. I should see you as one sees a beautiful thing lighted up and in its proper light. I should also like to have an opportunity of proving to you how much I am attached to you and how thoroughly my soul comprehends yours. I should like to have some happiness to sacrifice to you; but I should not like this to be at the price of your tranquillity. I should like you to be happy, and that my sacrifice should add to your happiness. I am so wretched that I do not know what I am saying. You will perhaps be able to unravel from my words what I mean and what I feel. It would be better that all should go well; everything would be sooner over. Why can we not both of us arrange the world as we like? No one would be able to complain, as we would try to make it right for everyone. You especially would do this, as you are so kind, so universal, so expansive, and you are always ready to help with your gentle protection those who have done you harm. Believe me, I know no one on earth who equals you. I do not know anyone, and yet I am acquainted with some very eminent persons. Why can I not write a portrait of you such as I feel it, such as I see it? People do not know you well, they do not know you thoroughly. What is best in you has to be divined. How was it that I was able to divine you so well? How was it that it was given to me to enter at once and so thoroughly into the sweet mysteries of your heart and soul?"¹

¹ Unsigned letter with no address. M. de Loménié's MSS. From the words *need of devotion* the letter has never been published.

We see how quickly Ballanche's friendship for the exiled woman of Lyons had become enthusiasm, and how happily this affection inspired him. We shall see how Ballanche endeavoured unceasingly to develop his friend's mind. In the letter from which we have just given a passage he tells her his ideas about the Italian language, which he finds rich in inflexions, suitable for the expression of sentiment and passion. "This observation," he writes, "has confirmed me in my opinion that the Italian language produces a physical emotion, and that it reaches the soul by the stirring of the senses." But he complains that the language spoken is often a simper, minced, exaggerated, and false, that at times it is only seductive because it seems different from what it is, through the softness of its consonances. "It (the Italian language) supplies all the false expressions for sentiments that are false and unnatural. I think it is very poor for true, intimate, and profound sentiments. When it has to depict such sentiments it paints a true thing in a manner which makes it appear false. I am judging it without knowing it and, so to speak, physiognomically." Just at this time Mme. Récamier was learning Italian, and Ballanche finishes his letter to her in the language to which he wants to accustom her.

About the latter part of Mme. Récamier's stay in Italy Mme. Lenormant, as a conscientious witness, gives us much information, illustrated by several anecdotes. She tells us a great deal about the old archæologist, Seroux d'Agincourt,¹ who, in spite of his eighty-three years, kept well up in his science. His intelligence was as keen as ever, and he often served as guide to Mme. Récamier, who could not have found one more agreeable nor better informed. M. d'Agin-court had devoted his talent and a large fortune to publishing the huge volumes, in-folio, of his *Histoire de l'art par les monuments depuis le IV^e siècle jusqu'au XVI^e.*² He had been established in Rome ever since 1779, and every day he sent Juliette flowers from his villa of the Trinité-du-Mont.³ He died in 1814.

¹ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 232 and following.

² Paris. 6 vols., with 325 plates, 1809-1823.

³ Ballanche, *Biogr.*, p. 115.

Mme. Récamier spent the warm season in the flat which Canova rented *alla locanda di Emiliano* under the shades of Albano.¹ In October, she returned to Rome and she was visited there by Lullin de Châtauvieux, whom she had known at Coppet. Among other visitors she had M. de Montlosier, who was travelling to study volcanoes, and Prince de Rohan-Chabot, the Emperor's chamberlain. She then decided to go to Naples, where she had been invited by King Joachim and Queen Caroline, M. and Mme. Murat. At the beginning of December, 1813, she left Rome,² at the same time as Chevalier Coghill, an English collector, who offered her his escort for the journey. At Velletri she played a bad trick, whether she knew it or not, on the Duc d'Otrante, who was going to see Murat on a mission for the Emperor. She had the horses which were for him harnessed to her carriage. She went to Chiaja, on arriving at Naples, to a flat that M. de Rohan-Chabot had taken for her.³

It is not necessary to go into details with regard to Murat's situation at Naples at this time. Son of the inn-keeper of La Bastide, the former *poaching hussar* had married Bonaparte's sister, Caroline, in 1800, and in August, 1808, Napoleon had given him the kingdom of Naples. He had introduced French institutions into his State. Quite recently he had been with the Emperor to Russia, and had had the chief command of the army in retreat. He returned to Italy after Leipzig. Mme. Récamier saw him just at the time when he was negotiating with England in order to keep his throne. Marshal and Prince of the Empire, the man who had done so much at Austerlitz and at Eylau now agreed to supply a contingent against France. Later on he was to be seen marching with his troops against Eugène de Beauharnais.

Mme. Récamier was received at the Palace with the greatest courtesy.⁴ The Queen was very cordial, admitted Juliette to her intimacy, to the great jealousy of the ladies of the Palace, and took her to Pompeii to be present at some

¹ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 234 and following. See the anecdote of the Albano fisherman. ² *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 242 and following.

³ The Charavay Bulletin quotes a letter from Mme. R. to M. de Rohan Chabot, No. 38492. ⁴ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 245 and following.

excavations. It was in this way that Mme. Récamier became acquainted with the anxieties that were troubling Murat. The Neapolitans wanted peace. Compelled to decide on one thing or another, Murat joined the coalition by the treaty of January 11th, 1814. Mme. Récamier's biographers¹ describe for us, no doubt dramatizing it slightly, the scene which took place in the Palace when Murat announced to the Queen the decision he had taken. "Suddenly," writes Ballanche,² "Murat rose, seized Mme. Récamier's hands and, taking her to a window which looked on to the gulf, showed her the English ships which had just entered the port. 'You see,' he said, in a changed voice, 'all is over!'" The worthy Ballanche adds, "And whilst the destinies of peoples and kings were moving on towards their fulfilment, Vesuvius was flinging towards Heaven torrents of flames and appeared to be testifying, by a disturbance of Nature, to the great revolution which threatened to tear Europe up from her foundations."

The fact that is certain is, that during the King's absence, Caroline, invested with the title of Regent and struggling with a difficult situation, tried to keep Mme. Récamier with her. "One day Mme. Récamier found her in a state of anguish and tears caused by the most grievous news. The Queen held in her hand letters from France, which contained the news of the departure for the Isle of Elba. How could she have failed to be moved to the depths of her soul by the account of the outrageous insults to which the Emperor had been exposed on the way thither. She had just been reading, too, Chateaubriand's : *Bonaparte et les Bourbons*, a passionate and at the same time fascinating philippic, like the circumstance, which no doubt contributed powerfully in determining the circumstance itself.³

Caroline had a very energetic disposition though. Sensitive as she was to her brother's misfortune, she devoted herself all the same to strengthening her husband's resolutions. From time to time Juliette dragged from her the pardon of

¹ Mme. Lenormant, work quoted, p. 249 and following. Rondelet, *Éloge*, pp. 128-129.

² *Biogr. de Mme. R.*, p. 129.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 130-131.

some condemned person. After the King's return a fête was given at Pompeii and at Portici. Mme. Récamier noticed the reserved and distrustful attitude of the Court as far as the King and Queen were concerned. It was from her souvenirs no doubt that Ballanche wrote the following lines : "After the promenade there was a banquet. The Queen had next her a Russian envoy, whose cold and almost hard expression seemed to be an exaggeration even of diplomatic reserve. His stiff deference and the impassibility of his face were a strange contrast to the affable and gracious manner which Caroline was making an effort to adopt with him."¹ Murat was reassured, though, when he found that he was keeping his throne. On bidding farewell to Mme. Récamier he made her promise that she would take refuge in Naples, if fresh incidents should disturb her tranquillity in France.²

At Naples, Mme. Récamier had been visited by the Comte de Neipperg, who was there on a special mission from the Austrian Government. He brought her news from Mme. de Staél. There is a letter from Neipperg dated January 2nd, 1814, in which he asks Mme. Récamier's permission to call upon her and talk with her about her illustrious friend.³ Since her departure from Lyons, Juliette was without any news of Corinne. On the 7th of May, 1813, Miss Randall, whose rôle with Mme. de Staél is revealed in the *Souvenirs du Duc de Broglie*, wrote to Mme. Récamier : "I have just received, my dear Madame, a letter from Mme. de Staél, who begs me to give her news of you, she is anxious about your health and asks me to inquire about it and to write to her giving all details. I am very glad to be able to tell you that Mme. de Staél's health is a little better, she suffers less now that the excessive cold weather is over."⁴ It seems, though, that Mme. de Staél was several months without writing herself.

Mme. Récamier returned to Rome for the Holy Week.⁵ She saw Canova again and, during her absence, he had

¹ Ballanche, *Biogr. de Mme. R.*, p. 134.

² *Ibid.*, p. 135.

³ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 250 and following.

⁴ Unpublished letter in M. Ch. de Loménie's collection in the packet of letters from the Duchesse de Broglie.

⁵ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 253 and following.

executed two busts of her. Neither of them pleased her and Canova, who was annoyed, kept them in his studio and later on transformed them.

Great events were taking place in France. On the 31st of March, 1814, Paris had capitulated before the Allies. Napoleon had abdicated at the Palace of Fontainebleau on the 20th of April. An unexpected restoration brought back to the throne of France the claimant whom Chateaubriand's pamphlet had just revealed to the nation. On the 3rd of May, in the morning, Louis XVIII entered Paris to the great joy of its citizens, who wanted and were ready to welcome the advent of a Liberal and Parliamentary government. The Comte d'Artois had preceded his brother and taken up the direction as Lieutenant-General. A list of the persons banished from Paris by order of the late Government was drawn up, and it was proposed that the return of these persons should be authorized. The list was approved, April 25th, 1814, by the Comte d'Artois and countersigned by Baron de Vitrolles. On this document the names of Mme. de Staél and Mme. Récamier both figured.¹ On receiving this news Juliette at once prepared to leave Italy.

The Duchesse de Luynes wrote her a letter in which she gave vent to her hatred of the man who had caused the death of the Duchesse de Chevreuse. "At last," she says,² "the time arranged by Providence is about to restore you to your friends. As I have the honour to be one of them I insist on being told about your plans, as I wish to be among the first to welcome you affectionately. If I did not carry about with me a sorrow which can never be forgotten, my happiness would now be complete. They are not liberating men who have come to our rescue but liberating angels. The coward, who has for so long a time made us feel his iron yoke, has signed everything. He has not even the courage of a Nero, he is like him in cruelty, but not in energy. The former did at least kill himself; the latter, with his plans for destroying Paris, had not that force. Do not let us talk any more about him. His power and that of his unworthy race

¹ *Mme. R. et les amis de sa jeunesse*, p. 403.

² April 7th, 1814.

is destroyed. Let us rejoice and leave others to unveil his crimes. You will learn all from our papers."¹

Mme. Récamier went to Naples again to see Queen Caroline, and before leaving Rome she witnessed the return of Pius VII.² She then started direct for Lyons, where she expected to find letters and to see her family and friends again.

On the 20th of May, Mme. de Staél wrote the following letter from Paris to Mme. Récamier : "I am ashamed to be in Paris without you, dear angel of my life. I want to know your plans. Would you like me to come to meet you at Coppet, where I want to spend four months ? Give me the happiness of seeing you at last. After so much suffering the sweetest thing I have to look forward to is you, and my heart is devoted to you for ever. Just a word as to your departure and arrival. I shall wait for that word before knowing what to do myself. I press you to my heart."³ A second note followed : "With what emotion, dear friend, do I see the moment of our meeting again arrive ! My heart has been beating wildly for two days. I shall be at your door this evening at eight o'clock. Ah, if I found that you had arrived ! Auguste wants to see you. You are more beloved than ever by your friends, and what about me ? I am the cause of all your troubles, shall you receive me with a little of the sentiment with which you inspire me ? I press you to my heart. I wrote to you to Rome, to Naples, &c., Monday."⁴ A third note in the same style shows Mme. de Staél's impatience.

On the 1st of June, 1814, Mme. Récamier arrived in Paris once more.⁵ She found there her intimate friends, Mme. de Staél, Mathieu de Montmorency, and Benjamin Constant.

On the 2nd of May, 1814, Constant⁶ wrote from Paris to

¹ Unpublished letter in M. Ch. de Loménie's collection. No. 14 of the letters from the Duchesse de Luynes.

² *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 256 and following.

³ Autograph letter, No. 186 of M. Ch. de Loménie's collection. See *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 259.

⁴ Unpublished autograph letter, No. 188 of M. Ch. de Loménie's collection.

⁵ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 260.

⁶ Constant noted, in a page of his *Carnet*, his sentiments and acts after his return to Paris with Auguste de Staél. See this passage in Sainte-Beuve. *Port. litt.*, pp. 282 and 283.

Rosalie, who was still his great confidant at Lausanne : " My opinions, which I do not disavow, might make enemies for me. But the time of party spirit has gone by. There is extreme tolerance now based on egoism. Everyone is so much taken up with thinking of himself that there is no time left to think of others, and I have received nothing but proofs of kindness from those even from whom I was formerly the furthest separated. The Princes, who have come back, are admirable in their moderation. Those who are around them are not quite as reasonable. But the situation is so difficult that necessity will lead to reason, in spite of anything. . . . If the little Corsican who has ended so strangely had taken me into his confidence, I should not have sold my little country-place, all my furniture, most of my library, things which I regret very much now. But he appeared to be so thoroughly well established, and the nation was so obliging ! I feel inclined to bring a law-suit against both of them for having duped me." ¹

Thus Constant, who was always above all events, either through his self-possession or cynicism, took very philosophically an event which excited great joy or anger in so many other people.

One wonders what Mathieu de Montmorency, her fellow exile, had been doing while Mme. Récamier was travelling in Italy. A notice which Adrien de Montmorency drew up for Chateaubriand² answers the question which our curiosity raises better than any other document.

" On his return from exile," says the biographer, " Mathieu remained as much as possible in Paris, the centre of our operations. The committee meetings for some years past had been held periodically in the various prisons where MM. de Polignac and Puyvère had been confined. MM. de Fitz-James, the Duc de Rohan, Louis de la Roche Jaquelin, de Vibraye, and a few noblemen who arrived from the provinces, were convoked to these gatherings. It was by our prisoner-friends that we were told of General Mallet's conspiracy.

¹ Unpublished letter, Geneva Library, Mcc. 36⁶.

² Inserted in the collection of letters from M. de Montmorency in M. Ch. de Loménie's collection.

On these occasions the love of the King and of liberty, monarchical sentiments and republican opinions made an alliance together, in order to bring about the ruin of the enemy of our country. The Polignacs could tell better than I can the results we counted on by that inconceivable enterprise, so admirable on account of the daring of its chief and the simplicity of the ways and means employed. It was, so to speak, a swoon of the Imperial Government which lasted a few hours.

"At the end of 1813, we had chosen a man of great intelligence, M. de Saint-Victor, to send to England. It was Mathieu, I believe, who drew up his instructions. He gave the King particulars as to the state of our forces and our hopes. We all appealed for a landing in Brittany, which our friends the Vendéans were ready to receive and second. M. de Saint-Victor met with such difficulties on the coast that he could not embark.

"At the beginning of 1814, when the Allies penetrated into France, MM. de Suzanet, de Chastenet-Puységur, de Rivière, my brother and I, all met at Tours. Our plan was to arrange a rising in Vendée. We did well to separate at Tours, as an order arrived for the police to arrest us. Soon after, we learnt that the Comte d'Artois had arrived in Switzerland. We then established sure communication and land-marks from Paris to the frontiers. It was by means of this certainty of communication that Rivière received at Bourges from Monsieur, then Lieutenant-General of the kingdom, his patents of Military Governor of that division.

"Mathieu, who was always required in Paris, had returned there. It was he who caused the idea to be adopted of sending one of our party to the camp of the Prince Royal of Sweden. M. de Gain Montagnac was entrusted with this mission. When we were assured of the arrival of *Monsieur* at Vesoul I was hiding at Orleans, with M. de Suzanet, at the house of his mother-in-law. He started for Vendée and I for Bourges, where I was to meet Mathieu at the house of Rivière. But events, and my anxiety about the situation, prevented my waiting for him, and I continued my way to Vesoul where, on account of the movement of the armies,

I no longer found Monsieur. He had retreated towards Nancy. Mathieu set off, passed the out-posts of the two armies, arrived at Dijon at the headquarters of the Emperor of Austria, had a long conference with Prince Metternich and received, from the hands of the Emperor, a white cockade to give to Monsieur, together with the Acts of the provisional government of Paris. Mathieu arrived at Nancy on Holy Wednesday with the despatches from Prince Metternich. He had with him M. de Bombelles. Monsieur was at church. When the service was over I took my friend to the Prince's room. He threw himself at his feet. As a reward of all his work and of his virtue he was appointed to take to the Lieutenant-General of the kingdom the news that the Revolution was over and that the Bourbons were mounting the throne again.”¹

Mme. Récamier, it seems, refrained from too much enthusiasm at a time when triumph was accompanied by such painful circumstances. She copied the wise reserve of her friend Jordan. She had borne her exile with courage and dignity, and much more patiently than Mme. de Staël. She was glad to be able to go back to her old ways, but she made no manifestations which would have been in bad taste. On seeing her so wise, one is reminded of the distinction which Petrarch makes in one of his letters : “Si lacrimans, si mœstus, si dejectus exivisti, exsulem te procul dubio neveris : si vero, nihil propriæ dignitatis oblitus, neque coactus sed libens, et eodem habitu frontis atque animi quo domi fueras, jussus exire, paruisti, peregrinaris profecto, non exsulas.”

¹ Adrien de Montmorency's account ends here.

CHAPTER XII

BENJAMIN CONSTANT'S LOVE

(JUNE 1ST, 1814—JULY 8TH, 1815)

Benjamin Constant and the incident of the *Memorial*.—*Le Siège de Soissons, anti-Napoleonic epopee*; the rôle of Anais.—Letters from Benjamin to Mme. Récamier.—Juliette's society in 1814.—Mme. de Staél and the Duke of Wellington.—Adrien de Montmorency is appointed Ambassador to Madrid.—Ballanche's *Antigone*.—The return of Napoleon and the conversion of Benjamin Constant (March, 1815).—Mme. Récamier inspires the article in the *Journal des Débats* (March 19th).—She stays in Paris during the Hundred Days.—Reading of *Adolphe*.—The Second Restoration.—Juliette and Mme. de Krüdener.—Murat's last letters.

ON returning to Paris, Mme. Récamier found her friends again and her society soon formed itself anew. She went back to her old ways and customs, received a great deal in her own home and went out very little. According to Ballanche's version,¹ France had just “exchanged, for a liberal Charter, the vanity of the domination of the world; she gained in liberty what she lost in power.” It was at this time, if we are to believe the same witness, that Chateaubriand read in Juliette's *salon* “*Les Abencérages*, a composition unknown to the public,”² in the presence of Mme. de Staél, Bernadotte, Macdonald, Wellington, the Duchesse de Luynes, Camille Jordan, and an élite gathered from the society of all Europe.³

At this epoch, Mme. Récamier was very much in vogue. It was her triumphal time. The Duc de Doudeauville went there with Mathieu de Montmorency, David the painter met the

¹ *Biogr. de M. R.*, p. 137.

² *Ibid.*, p. 138.

³ We have published Ballanche's account in an article on *Camille Jordan et la Restauration* in the *Revue d'hist. de Lyon*, March—April, 1902.



Benjamin Constant

old Chevalier de Boufflers, and Augustus of Prussia, Canova. Sismondi talked with Pozzo di Borgo or Humboldt, and Metternich was there at the same time as Talma.

One man was to emerge, though, from this group of individuals all so illustrious in various ways, a man who lived for all that was romantic and whose wonderful intelligence was ever in search of adventures. Benjamin Constant was about to claim for himself the first rôle on this little stage, and his intercourse with Juliette was to take so important a turn that the fate of the entire country might have been involved in it. This certainly deserves some commentary, and no commentary could be as satisfactory as an exact and somewhat detailed account of the matter.

The Queen of Naples, very naturally concerned about the discussion which Murat's situation would provoke at the Vienna Congress, was anxious to ensure the help of a skilful writer who would support and defend with his pen her husband's claims. Mme. Récamier was consulted, and she suggested Constant, who accepted the mission. He wrote a *Memorial*, the plan of which in its first form has been preserved.¹ Murat's new allies promised to preserve for him his kingdom, and to add to it some of the Church States. As is well known, in spite of these promises, the Vienna Congress reconstituted the pontifical State. The incident of the *Memorial* had at least the result of making the friendship which had long existed between Benjamin and Juliette a still closer one. Friendship somewhat quickly developed into love.

At present we have Constant's letters to Mme. Récamier. After Mme. Ch. Lenormant's famous lawsuit, by which she prevented the newspaper *La Presse* from using these letters, she published them herself.² These documents enable us to explain the origin and the progress of this crisis. It was at the end of August that Mme. Récamier asked Constant to call on her.³ "He went, and had a very long conversation with her. They first discussed the destinies of a kingdom,

¹ *Lettres de B. C. à Mme. R.* Appendix II, p. 351 and following.

² *Ibid.* (1807-1830). Paris: C. Levy, 1882.

³ The 31st of August. (*Sainte-Beuve, Port. litt.* III, p. 282.)

and then their own sweet memories of days gone by. When she talked to him, though, he forgot the grave political interests in question and only saw the woman, whose sweet voice penetrated him through and through.”¹

Constant, at that epoch, was considered as one of Napoleon’s most inveterate enemies. He had even composed an “anti-napoleonic epopee” entitled *Le Siège de Soissons*, a poem in nine books and about two thousand lines which, after lying dormant for a long time among the archives of a “Society of Agriculture, Science, and Art,” has lately been published and criticized.² In this work, which in parts is obscure and of questionable merit, the supposed bachelor of arts, Bennitta-Smancino fumes against the tyrant whom the *Journal intime* qualifies at the same time as a “cowardly rascal” and “a monster.” In all probability the *Siège de Soissons* was commenced in 1811,³ continued during the last years of the Empire, and touched up after Waterloo. In reality this romance of the sixth century, in blank verse, “was a harsh satire on contemporary manners and customs.”⁴ It was Napoleon whom Benjamin Constant painted as the adventurer, a native of Bénévent who subdued Italy, invaded Gaul, put Gontran to death and subjugated Caribert. In the same way the Scandinavian chief who crushed the power of the usurper represented Wellington.

Mme. Récamier played a part in the epopee of the *Siège de Soissons*. The publisher who has given us this poem⁵ believed that the courtesan fairy, Elga, was no other than Mme. de Staél, that Prince Oscar was Augustus of Prussia, and that Mme. Récamier supplied the elements for the personages of Elmaïre and Anaïs. The resemblance between Elmaïre and Mme. Récamier seems to us doubtful and almost inadmissible even. Elmaïre, in the poem, is the daughter of Argaléon and the wife of Oscar. She is living with her husband in a

¹ Work quoted, Preface, p. viii, “Be bold,” she said, “and I came away from her madly in love.”—Extract from B. C.’s *Carnet*. (Sainte-Beuve, *Portr. litt.* III, p. 282.)

² By V. Waille, Paris, Picard.

³ See Waille’s argument, p. 3.

⁴ About Constant’s violence in his campaign against Napoleon, see P. Gautier, *Mme. de Staél et Napoléon*, p. 353 and following.

⁵ See p. 174 and following. M. Waille’s arguments do not appear to us very strong.

solitary hamlet when Sigebert arrives and asks for shelter. Théodulphe surrounds the cottage of Elmaïre and Oscar with his soldiers. Oscar is killed and Elmaïre dies of grief (Book VII). In this complicated story it is difficult to recognize the utterly different adventure of Mme. Récamier and Prince Augustus at Coppet. Anaïs, on the contrary, might owe more than one trait to Juliette. Anaïs appears in the third book. She is a slave who wants to deliver Florestan from the hands of the fairy. Now this Florestan who, according to M. Waille, represents the Emperor of Russia, Alexander I, seems rather to be Benjamin Constant himself. The love scene described with a certain realism at the end of the third book, the scene in which the fairy imprints with fury "the ivory of her teeth" on her lover's mouth, all this Constant may have written thanks to his own private memories. In Book VIII Florestan, "still bewitched," is shown to us groaning in the fairy's palace.

Triste, mais belle encore, on voit marcher la fée,
Murmurant quelques mots d'une voix étouffée,
Et promenant partout ses inquiets regards.

Among the bushy groves which surround the magic palace, he sees the ingenuous Anaïs advancing towards him. She covers him with the folds of her robe, bears him away on a cloud and takes him to the palace of Almanzor, that is, it appears, to the palace of the devil. It is there that, after some very complicated and on the whole very uninteresting ceremonies, Anaïs triumphs over Elga and gives Florestan back the human form which the fairy had caused him to lose.

The whole of this epopee is too unworthy of Constant's genius for us to study it more closely. His letters are much more valuable to us. As soon as the *Memorial* for Murat was written he gave a copy of it to Mme. Récamier, begging her not to let anyone else have it.¹ According to him, his passion for Juliette soon made him beside himself and very unhappy indeed. "Certainly," he writes in September, 1814, "I am . not joking, for I am suffering. I am trying to hold myself

¹ *Letters*, pp. 12 and 13.

back on a rapid slope. It is all the same to you to make anyone suffer in this way! Angels, too, have their cruelties.”¹

Mme. Récamier made appointments with him which it seems she sometimes failed to keep. Benjamin Constant gave himself up to this new passion with his usual ardour. “Politics, society,” everything disappeared from his mind.² He multiplied his letters at the risk of becoming a nuisance, he pursued Mme. Récamier in all the *salons* she frequented, went and took up his abode near when she left Paris for Angervilliers, wandered about “wounded to death”³ and without any hope of getting over it, begging for “a slight sign of affection, some kindly attention.”⁴ Juliette, we cannot doubt, reproached Constant with his “want of morality.”⁵ He scarcely attempted to defend himself, but he offered to turn over a fresh leaf as he had offered to do already so many times. “I am like a child in your hands,” he writes, “give me the virtues I was intended to have.”⁶ Ballanche read this sentimental phraseology and no doubt pointed out to Juliette the inanity of it.

Since her return to Paris, Mme. Récamier had been in fairly comfortable circumstances. Her financial affairs had improved. M. Récamier had been active again in his business affairs, and his wife had come into a little capital of 400,000 francs from her mother. She had her horses and carriage and a box at the Opera, and she now began receiving at home after the performance. “That was the time,” writes her niece, “when I saw Mme. Récamier really lead a social life, with all the seduction, the pleasure and the movement that such a life offers.”⁷ Besides her intimate friends, Mme. de Staél, Mathieu de Montmorency, who had become *Chevalier d'honneur* to the Duchesse d'Angouleme, Benjamin Constant, who besieged her at all hours, Jordan, who came to see her on every voyage, she now met again Mme. Moreau “*Maréchale de France*,” Adrien de Montmorency and his son Henri, the Marquis de Boisgelin and Mme. de Béranger, the future Mme. Alexis de

¹ Letters, p. 13.

² Ibid., p. 15.

³ Ibid., p. 18.

⁴ Ibid., p. 21.

⁵ Ibid., p. 23.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Souv. et Corr., I, p. 262.

Noailles, the Marquise de Catellan, Mme. de Boigne, Mme. Bernadotte, who in France was only called Comtesse de Gothland.¹ With as much wisdom as tact, Mme. Récamier exacted from her guests an absolute respect of political neutrality at her receptions.

No difficulties separated her now from Mme. de Staél. They were invited together, during the summer, by Queen Hortense, who had accepted from Louis XVIII the estate of Saint-Leu converted into a duchy. They had, on this occasion, met Prince Augustus of Prussia again.² Mme. de Staél had never been more active. It was at this time that she wrote the letters to a Prussian Princess to which Sainte-Beuve refers.³ She saw Juliette nearly every day and announced her visits by short laconic notes in the following style : "I shall be with you this evening at nine, my beautiful friend, and we will talk of the Empire of the world. Friday."⁴ When Juliette kept away too long she scolded her affectionately and also reproached her with monopolizing Benjamin Constant, but in a tone which no longer appears to be that of jealousy. "How is it, beautiful Juliette, that you did not come in yesterday. You forget, when you see carriages at the door, that there are ten other persons living in the same house as I am in. Eugène d'Harcourt will tell you that there were three persons here. You ought to come here this evening. Mme. de Argenson is here and is the only woman. I should like you two to know each other. Tell Benjamin to come, I never see him now ; he never asks about anything concerning us. He is madly in love with you : you ought to make him take some interest in other people. Come this evening at nine, I beseech you."⁵

Mme. de Staél, according to the expression of one of her biographers, had resigned herself to the Bourbons without

¹ *Souv. et Corr.*, p. 262 and following.

² Degérando, *Lettres inédites*, p. 20. *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 270 and following.

³ *Corresp.*, II, pp. 274 and 275 (see *Bulletin du Bibliophile*, March, 1868).

⁴ Unpublished autograph letter, No. 191 of M. Ch. de Loménié's collection.

⁵ Unpublished letter from Mme. de Staél, No. 193 of M. Ch. de Loménié's collection.

being converted to them.¹ Whatever may have been her horror for the foreigners she had found in France, "Germans, Russians, Cossacks, Baskirs," she could not help admiring Wellington. After the Battle of Toulouse, Wellington had left the army and had hastened to Paris on hearing the news of the occupation of the capital by the Allies. It was at the house of Mme. de Staél that Juliette Récamier saw him for the first time. According to the somewhat dry account given by Mme. Récamier of her intercourse with the English General, which Mme. Lenormant has published,² Wellington's visits to Juliette were numerous. He wrote her a series of "short, insignificant notes," and lent her the letters of Mlle. de Lespinasse. Mme. Récamier saw him again after Waterloo, the day after his return. She received him once, and after that her door was closed to him, for a time at least. Whenever Wellington was in Paris he never failed to call on Mme. de Staél's friend.

Mme. Lenormant has published one of Wellington's "insignificant" notes.³ Mme. Récamier kept eight letters from the Duke, the first of which is dated June 10th, 1814, and the last, November 26th, 1817.⁴ In one of these letters he says: "I must confess, Madame, that I do not much regret that business prevents my calling on you this afternoon, as every time I see you I leave still more penetrated by your charms, and less inclined to give my attention to politics." The Duchesse d'Abrantès, in her *Mémoires sur la Restauration*,⁵ jokes about Wellington's love for Mme. Récamier. Juliette was at that epoch the object of so much attention and homage that her friends said to her laughing: "You are like the early Christians, delivered over to wild beasts." Mme. de Staél, on the contrary, took this episode seriously: "I expected you yesterday evening, beautiful, wicked one, and Lord Wellington came for you. You will make him cool with me

¹ A. Sorel, *Mme. de Staél*, p. 157. P. Gautier, *Mme. de Staél et Napoléon*, p. 359.

² *Souv. et Corr.*, p. 266 and following. Mme. Mohl (work quoted, p. 63) refuses to believe that Mme. Récamier spoke to Wellington in the arrogant way which Mme. Lenormant records.

³ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 269.

⁴ *C. L. A. R.*, No. 131.

⁵ Vol. III, p. 323 and following. Compare J. Lemoinne, *Journal des Débats*, October 27th, 1859.

if you fail to keep your appointments with him. I am not at all well. If I go out I will come to see you this evening, but I am venturing to count on you to-morrow for dinner. I am nearly as much separated from you as I was at Coppet. Tuesday."¹ This first note is followed by another almost as urgent. "I shall go to see you on Tuesday evening, Juliette dear. Accursed Angervilliers! Lord Wellington came here to-day to complain seriously of you, and to tell me that he should be here on Thursday for you. I send you kisses like a lover."² M. de Forbin, whom we shall meet with again in Constant's letters, was very jealous of the attentions of the man whom Mme. de Stael pompously styled "the noble Duke."³

Mlle. de Stael now used to go to Mme. Récamier's. After hearing the *Abencérages* read, which seemed to her "the perfection of grace," she wrote to her great friend, Mlle. de Barante, the future Mme. Anisson du Perron, as follows: "Mme. Récamier is kind and pretty, but a life of petty coquettices does not elevate the mind; she would be worth a great deal more if she did not squander all her time and her affections on all sides, but she is generous and fascinating."⁴ The daughter was more severe and less kindly disposed than her mother. Mme. de Stael, who spent the summer of 1814 at Coppet,⁵ continued to exchange affectionate letters with Juliette.

"July 22nd [1814].

"COPPET.

"I am quite astonished at my courage, my dear friend, and I must confess that I am astonished to be here, and that I have the greatest difficulty in keeping up the beautiful love of solitude which brought me here. I was received with flowers and couplets, but my mind is not rural enough yet not to regret your little flat, our quarrels, and our conversations, and

¹ Unpublished autograph letter, No. 196 of M. Ch. de Loménié's collection.

² Unpublished autograph letter, No. 197 of M. Ch. de Loménié's collection. The letter following is written with the same object (No. 199).

³ Unpublished autograph letter, No. 200 of same collection.

⁴ July 13th, 1814, *Lettres de la duchesse de Broglie*, pp. 2 and 3.

⁵ A. Sorel, *Mme. de Stael*, p. 159.

all the life which is with you. I beseech you to write to me about all that concerns you. I have seen Lady Davy here and she talked a great deal about you and about Rome. She thinks you are charming, but was afraid of her husband being captivated by you. I am glad to think that I no longer fear your charm, so that I can now enjoy it. If my son finds me a pretty country place near Paris I think I shall come back about the 1st of September, but my rival, Mme. de Catellan, will perhaps take you away from me. I maintain that I love you more than she does. . . . What memories this Coppet brings back to me! Ah, dear friend, what a long, sad story life is! . . . ”¹

On the 18th of August, 1814, Mme. de Staél again wrote to Mme. Récamier :

“General Filangieri brought me a charming little letter from you, my dear friend. Your words are full of sweetness, and it seems to me that you must foresee the future. . . . I think I shall take Clichy, but if you were not to visit me there the place would make me sad by the very memory of the pleasures that I have had there, thanks to you. As you always try to do me good in every way, you tell me that Benjamin was affected by my departure. During the two months I spent in Paris, I did not have the faintest sign of friendship from him, and I had not imagined the possibility of being so indifferent. Anyhow, it is no longer there that I have placed my life, but fifteen years wasted in that way make an abyss which nothing can fill. Ah, Juliette dear, how much time and emotion we have wasted in life. You, who are much younger than I am and a hundred times more lovable, you will see the emptiness of all this. There is someone here who was a second *you*, in England, twenty years ago, Lady Charlotte Campbell, but her life has been different from yours.”²

Adrien de Montmorency, whom we shall see again later on in Rome, Vienna, and London, was appointed in 1814 French

¹ Autograph letter, No. 154 of M. Ch. de Loménie’s MSS. Compare *Coppet et Weimar*, p. 273. Blennerhassett, *Mme. de Staél*, III, p. 604.

² Autograph letter, No. 195 in M. Ch. de Loménie’s collection. See *Coppet et Weimar*, pp. 273 and 274.

Ambassador to Madrid. He was broken-hearted when he left Mme. Récamier. He wrote to her on the 19th of November, from Ormes, as follows : "Never have I felt, as I did in those last moments, the unbearable torture of leaving all that one loves, and when I think that it was with so much trouble and help from my friends that I prepared to take a position which imposes on me so cruel a sacrifice, it seems to me that I have been the boldest, the most imprudent, and the most ill-advised of men, as far as my happiness is concerned. In another few hours I shall get into the carriage again, and go on further and further away from you. Adieu, my dear and charming friend. For my sake and for the sake of our long, faithful and intimate friendship, make an effort, in spite of your indolent inclinations, to write me some long, expansive letters. Let me have letters like your conversation, your ideas about persons and things, as you always judge and define things wonderfully. . . ."¹

Mme. Lenormant's words are quite true then. Mme. Récamier had never been more surrounded, nor more beloved, than in this year 1814, when men who were famous or agreeable in so many different ways were paying her, at the age of thirty-seven, the most assiduous attentions. Benjamin Constant may have been actuated by his own self-esteem, and excited by the number of her admirers to endeavour to obtain the preference himself. We can very well imagine this to have been so. When in the autumn Mme. de Staél returned to Paris, and when her *salon* was once more filled with friends,² he had not even a thought for the companion of quite a part of his life. With that versatility which was the characteristic of his disposition, he was now entirely devoted to Juliette who, as a matter of fact, could not feel very much flattered by this brusque and uncertain passion. Juliette tried to avoid him,³ refused to have long conversations with him, but he only persisted all the more. He was most humble and wrote beseeching letters, to which she did not reply, for Ballanche was there watching over her. He laid claim to having

¹ Unpublished letter in M.Ch.de Loménie's collection. Address : Madame Récamier, Rue Basse-du-Rampart, Paris.

² A. Sorel, *Mme. de Staél*, p. 159 and following.

³ *Lettres de Constant*, p. 25.

strength of character,¹ knowing very well that no one could have faith in that. Juliette made fun of him, and this hurt him, as he was perhaps sincere in his regret that no one believed in his sincerity.

One must not be duped by Constant, as he delighted in mystifying people, but with this individual, who was so hopelessly variable, sometimes cynical, sometimes mysterious, with a mind so supple and, if one may also say it, a heart so astonishingly supple, one must be prepared for anything, and even for sincerity. It certainly seems as though he really was in love with Juliette Récamier and, irritated by the calmness of her resistance, destined, by that very circumstance, to know this time what passion really was. Juliette did not spare him, she had known him too long to have any scruples as far as he was concerned. One day when he asked her whether she was receiving in the evening, she replied: "Not you, at any rate."² He accepted the rebuff, so that he was no doubt in love. He had recourse to the good services of Mme. de Staél.³ His one ambition was to see Juliette every day, for a minute at least. "The whole interval between," he wrote, "is agony for me."⁴

Mme. Récamier tried to break off all intercourse with Constant. If we are to believe him he was then "beside himself, without any strength, only able to talk like a dying man or a fool."⁵ Mme de Staél attributed this agitation "to wounded vanity," Prosper de Barante attributed it to "disappointed ambition."⁶ He himself thought of leaving for Nantes, and from there perhaps going to America, "where there is fighting going on, and one might be able to get killed under the pretext of liberty."⁷ Every day his letters were more passionate and more beseeching. "Do not fling a rock upon this heart which has had such difficulty in re-opening," he said to Juliette.⁸

There could be no greater contrast than this fever of Constant's and Ballanche's serenity. It was this year, 1814, that the latter published his *Antigone* which, after various trans-

¹ *Lettres de Constant*, p. 27.

² *Ibid.*, p. 30.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 36 and 37.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

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formations, had become a sort of prose elegy, a philosophical romance, in which Oedipus and his daughter represented the submission of unfortunate humanity to higher decrees. The thought of Juliette had more than once inspired the author. In 1819 Ballanche wrote to Mme. Récamier :

“ Do you remember Antigone ? Do you remember in what terms she is consecrated by her father on the banks of the Aulide ? Her father, who is the man of Destiny, wishes her to live apart from other mortals because there is no man worthy to be her husband. Do you remember the heights of Cithaeron, and Oedipus, when dying, saying to Antigone : ‘ What does happiness or misfortune matter to you ? ’ ? Yes, you are much more than the Antigone I have invented, or than Racine’s Aricie. Yes, that special destiny, that high-mindedness, that generous heart, that genius for sacrifice are traits of your character. You have also inspired the hymn to beauty which Antigone sang when with her young companions. I was just beginning to work at my *Antigone* when you appeared to me at Lyons, and God only knows how much you have helped me for the painting of this admirable personage. Antiquity is far from having supplied me with all the points. This ideal has been revealed to me by you ; and my sole merit consists in having so quickly learnt to know and appreciate you. Do you remember that it was when I was with you in Rome, that I wrote the funeral epithalamium ? I shall explain all this some day. I want it to be known in the future that so perfect a creature is not entirely my creation. I have already said elsewhere that men invent nothing, so that I am one more example of this. Could I, puny as I am, have raised myself to that ? ”¹

There was some reason then in what Benjamin Constant said to Mme. Récamier : “ I consider *Antigone* doubly beautiful ! ”² But he was far from having the simplicity of heart of a Ballanche. He had several intrigues still on hand. He was obliged to keep Mme. de Constant (Charlotte von Hardenberg) from coming to Paris, where she would have met

¹ Unpublished letter, dated February 13th, 1819, addressed to Mme. Récamier, Rue d’Anjou Saint-Honoré. No. 31 of M. Ch. de Loménie’s collection.

² *Lettres*, p. 40.

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ne. de Staél.¹ He was thinking, too, of writing a work on responsibility, and of becoming a candidate for the Institute.² He did not know very clearly himself what he wanted. When he saw that his love was decidedly repulsed, he protested that it was only friendship for which he asked.³ As soon as he became excited though, he used the most extreme language, and this woman of nearly fifty years of age wrote like a foolish girl of eighteen.

Constant had, or thought he had, as a rival with Mme. Récamier, M. de Forbin, who later on became Director-General of the Museums of France. The Comte de Forbin certainly had been on very friendly terms with Juliette ever since 1813, and this intercourse, a proof of which we have in

interesting correspondence,⁴ was to continue until the Count's death in 1841. M. de Forbin turned skilfully against Constant the novel *Adolphe*, which was now nearly finished, and in which Mme. de Staél's friend did not appear

to be very persevering as far as his affection was concerned.⁵ He certainly had no difficulty in demonstrating that Constant was before all things an egoist. Just at this same time Queen Caroline Murat had to defend herself against the aims of the publicist, who would not be content with a secret mission to Vienna, but wanted to go to the Congress with an official title.⁶ Constant was exacting with present friends, and ungrateful to old ones. He dared to write as follows of Mme. de Staél : "I do not consider her as a friend, and I listen to her with mistrust."⁷ We can scarcely blame Mme. Récamier, therefore, for treating him as she did, for stoning without any emotion to his most tender protestations, for not being interested in his works, although they were excellent, and for disdaining his affection, which was not sincere. By February, 1815, he had made no progress whatever in the affection of "the adored angel," who had known him for fourteen years and who, through knowing him, had a certain contempt for him.

Events were about to take place which were destined to

¹ *Lettres*, p. 43.

² *Ibid.*

³ Letter No. 18.

⁴ *C. L. A. R.* No. 50.

⁵ *Lettres de Constant*, p. 73.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 92 and following.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

give still more interest and importance to this passion of Benjamin Constant's for Madame Récamier. On the 1st of March, 1815, Napoleon with his nine hundred men descended on the shores of the Gulf of Jouan. On the 20th of March he was installed in the Tuileries, the evening of the same day that Louis XVIII left with all he possessed for Ghent. The Bourbons' attempts at resistance had failed somewhat pitifully. Napoleon endeavoured to get some support from the Liberal citizens. He sent for Benjamin Constant, who entered the Council of State and became the principal collaborator of *L'Acte additionnel aux Constitutions de l'Empire*.

It was a dramatic stroke, and everyone was as surprised at Constant's brusque conversion as at the Emperor's triumphal return. The question has been much discussed as to how far Constant's passion for Mme. Récamier was responsible for his action, and it is a question well worth examining. The points of the case are the following: On the 8th of March Benjamin Constant wrote for the *Journal de Paris* an article which appeared on the 11th, in which he depicted all the dangers of Bonaparte's return. On the 19th of March he published in the *Journal des Débats* his celebrated article against the Emperor. "I will not," he says, "like a wretched turncoat, crawl from one power to another, covering infamy with sophism and stammer out base words to redeem an unworthy life." On the 20th of March the *Journal des Débats* printed an article which was still more violent, and unsigned, but which the historian of the Press in France, Eugène Hatin, attributes to Charles Nodier.¹ Constant's ideas were reproduced and commented on. The author of *L'Esprit de conquête* therefore appeared as one of the chiefs indicated of the resistance. His friends were trembling for him. Mme. de Staél wrote in haste to Juliette.

"6 o'clock in the morning."

"My dear friend, how touched I was to find in the same misfortune the same protection, the same interest of my good angel. Do me one more service, make B. go away—

¹ *Histoire de la Presse*, VII, p. 119.

I have the greatest anxiety about him after what he has written. My route is one of perfect security and nothing should hold one any longer to Paris. Ah, if we could meet again at the shores of the lake. You are a divinity on great occasions. I am writing to my son what you know. I put all my affections under your protection. In Heaven's name let us save our friends. Ah, what misery!"¹

On the 14th of April Constant had an interview with the Emperor, and agreed to submit to him a project of Constitution.²

About the interpretation of this sort of apostasy, polemics have been numerous and opinions very divided. As early as 1821, in a pamphlet entitled *La Chambre de 1820 ou la Monarchie sauvée, galerie politique des 422 députés*, "by a royalist,"³ Alissan de Chazet maintained that Constant's conversion had been determined by "an incident quite foreign to politics." This, it seems, was the opinion of Duvergier de Hauranne.⁴ Delécluze states things clearly in his *Souvenirs*.⁵ According to him, Mme. Récamier only influenced Constant as far as writing the article for the *Débats* was concerned. "It was she who gave him, in a way, the plan of it, and the work was done in her presence, for B. Constant wrote the article at her house, on her table." And Sainte-Beuve for once shares the opinion of Delécluze.⁶ Mme. Lenormant, on the contrary, protests against this idea.⁷

¹ Autograph letter, No. 203 of M. Ch. de Loménie's collection. See *Coppet et Weimar*, p. 283. This note is undated, and has been copied with some alterations by Ballanche. *Biog. de Mme. R.*, pp. 178-179.

² See *Mémorial de Sainte-Hélène*, II, p. 283.

³ Paris, Ponthieu (compare *Interm. des cherch. et cur.*, 1884, p. 257).

⁴ *Histoire du gouvernement parlementaire*, II, p. 437.

⁵ *Revue rétrospective*, X, 1889, I, pp. 54 and 55.

⁶ *Nouveaux Lundis*, I, pp. 424-425.

⁷ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 278. See too, *La vérité sur les Cent jours par L(ucien) B(onaparte), prince de Canino, suivie de documents historiques sur 1815*, Paris, Ladvocat, 1835, and Iung, *Mém. de Lucien Bonaparte*, III, p. 235 and following : Coulmann, *Réminiscences*, I, p. 90, and III, p. 84; Pasquier, *Mémoires*, p. 181 note ; Loëve-Veimars, article quoted on Constant, p. 203 (very interesting); Villemain, *Souv. cont. d'hist. et de littérature*; see particularly the study of Benjamin Constant by Louis de Loménie, in the *Galerie des contemp. illustres*, VIII, p. 57 and following. Finally there is what Constant himself says in his *Mémoires sur les Cent jours*, which he published in 1820.

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The Duc Achille-Victor de Broglie, in his *Souvenirs*,¹ tells us about a drive in the diligence that he went one night with Benjamin Constant and Auguste de Staél. It is a veritable scene for a novel. Constant told his companions about the efforts he had made to enter into negotiations with the devil. "His face was pale," writes the narrator,² "and he had a sardonic smile as he spoke He fell into a painful reverie full of anguish and I must confess, in all humility, that we did too." A few days later the duke was at a ball at the house of M. Greffulhe. It was a masked ball, and he surprised Mme. Récamier flirting both with Constant and with Auguste de Forbin. It was on leaving this *soirée* that he heard of the landing of the Emperor at Cannes. Mme. de Staél "packed up quickly." The duke remained and witnessed the general consternation. "Forbin," he says, "dragged his long sword about in Mme. Récamier's *salon*, and Benjamin Constant was there brandishing the article that he had, to his own misfortune, published in the *Journal des Débats*. They were both of them more concerned about the effect they were making on the mistress of the house than about anything else in the world."³

With all these souvenirs, which are so confused, and at times contradictory, a critical discussion of the question is necessary. It is a little historical problem to be solved, and Sainte-Beuve gives us the method. "The letters" (Constant's), he says, "addressed to Mme. Récamier would aid very much, but they would be insufficient as regards truth if we did not add to them their counterpart, that is what he wrote for himself afterwards, and which many people have read, and, finally, if we did not try to throw light on everything by a moralist's explanations, such as are not generally to be found in the pleadings of advocates."⁴

Constant's *Journal intime*, as published by Mlle. Melegari, is fairly rich in information as regards this crisis. By this, even better than by the letters, we know exactly what Constant's sentiments for Mme. Récamier were during the winter

¹ I, p. 285 and following.

² Note that a little before this he had said the night was dark.

³ I, p. 292.

⁴ *Causeries du Lundi*, I, p. 132.

of 1814-1815. It is in this that he appears the most distinctly, with all his dilettantism and his need of virtuosity. Juliette's confidences had turned his head. "I feel this," he writes. "I know the danger to which I am exposing myself, for I have to deal with a thorough coquette, but the fascination of the difficulty to overcome tempts me on."¹ Here the passionate tenderness (or what he is trying to make appear as such) of the correspondence gives way to a somewhat cold cruelty. "I wanted," he writes, "to make her uneasy by my absence, but I could not resist going. I saw that she was getting colder and more reasonable every day. I have a horror of her. I would never see her again if that could pain her. I would give ten years of my life if she could suffer the half of what I am suffering."² Nevertheless, whatever may have been Constant's egoism and however strongly he had tried to protect himself from dangerous emotions, he was caught in his own trap. Mme. Récamier's coldness caused him fits of anger which he mistook for despair; Forbin's intrigues made him mad with jealousy; his quarrels with Mme. de Staél kept him in a permanent state of agitation and feverishness. He was more obstinate than passionate in the pursuit of an affection which escaped him all the time. At the beginning of 1815 he was nearly beside himself, for he was repulsed on every side, suspected by the genuine royalists, without any real support and at the mercy of any circumstance. Up to the last moment, even after the news of the landing of Bonaparte, he hesitated between the Bonapartists and the Royalists.³ It was Mme. Récamier who turned the scale and made him decide to write the article for the *Débats*. He confessed this openly to Barante.⁴ "It was M. de Forbin's long sword that ruined me," he said. "I, too, wanted to prove my devotion. I went home and wrote the article for the *Journal des Débats*."

Sainte-Beuve had had Benjamin Constant's *Carnet* in his hands, and Loëve-Veimars also had seen it. The passage which the former quotes⁵ entirely confirms the indications of

¹ *Journal intime*, p. 142.

² *Ibid.*, p. 143.

³ *Ibid.* p. 149.

⁴ *Souv. du baron de Barante*, II, p. 127.

⁵ *Portr. litt.*, III, pp. 282-283.

the *Journal intime*. Constant states briefly the steps he takes and his impressions one after the other: "I am throwing myself headlong into the cause of the Bourbons and Mme. Récamier is urging me on. Chateaubriand maintains that everything would be saved if he were made Minister of the Interior. Stupidities of the Royalists. Their refusal to do anything to win back public opinion. I am more and more stubborn in repulsing Bonaparte. My article of the 19th March. The King leaves the same day." It was certainly Mme. Récamier then who inspired the article of March 19th. She did not have to use very great persuasion with Constant, who was hesitating and only seeking to play a part of some kind. As M. Anatole France has said shrewdly: "Benjamin Constant did not take the ideas of women, he was too intelligent for that. But, as he loved them, he thought for them and in the way that they wished. Alone, he was incapable of making up his mind. Never was there a man more undecided. Ideas were conceived in too great a quantity, and they were too active in his brain. They formed themselves there, not like an army in strong, square battalions, but in a light troop, like the bees of the Attic poets and philosophers, or like ballet-dancers, forming themselves in groups and separating again all the time harmoniously. . . ."¹

The information contained in the *Journal intime*, the indications of the *Carnet*, and the letters to Mme. Récamier give us every detail of the crisis. Constant, in order to please Mme. Récamier, went much farther than his own opinions justified him in doing.² He was quite right when he said, "I am certainly like Marmont, Chateaubriand, and Lainé, one of the four most compromised men in France."³ The arrival of Bonaparte on the 20th, and the departure of the King, made him feel still more the gravity of his position. He concealed himself at first at the house of the American Minister,⁴ and he then decided to escape. He started (this

¹ *Vie littéraire*, I, p. 63 and following.

² This is quite the opinion of L. de Loménie (work quoted, p. 60).

³ *Lettres à Mme. R.*, p. 166.

⁴ *Carnet*, p. 283. On the counsel of Lafayette (Loménie, work quoted, p. 63).

has been several times doubted), and then he wrote to Juliette as follows: "I do not think severe measures will be taken at first, from all that I have heard; but very soon the country will be uninhabitable."¹ The prohibition about the use of horses for the diligences delayed him two days, and he took advantage of this for putting Juliette's letters in safety.² On the 23rd he left Paris, and started for Nantes with an American Consul.³ He travelled two nights without stopping. On the 25th, at Angiers (at Ancenis, the *Carnet* states), he heard that Nantes belonged to the Bonapartists, and that the Prefect had left his post.⁴ He turned back, and drove without stopping as far as Sèvres, intending to go to Paris from there.⁵ About all these details Barante's account confirms the various statements by Constant.⁶

Benjamin Constant was not in reality very uneasy about himself. At the time he left, no inquiries had been made about him. "I believe," he wrote, just as he was starting, "that all will pass off quietly."⁷ The first obstacle on his route made him return. Sebastiani and Fouché, whom he saw the following day,⁸ had no difficulty in reassuring him. Joseph Bonaparte did the rest.⁹ He persuaded Constant that the Emperor had come back again with Liberal intentions, and hinted to him of his appointment to the Council of State. "Really, then let us accept!" wrote Constant. "Things will remain despotic, no matter!"¹⁰ He asked for a passport in order to feel more safe, gave Joseph an article for the *Journal de Paris*, heard the reproaches of Lafayette and of Mme. de Staél without being affected by them, and finally saw the Emperor and agreed to draw up the project for the Constitution.¹¹ Constant behaved through the whole of this affair, not like a statesman, and still less as a philosopher, but as a gambler accustomed to the risks of a high stake, who meant to win and who did win.

¹ *Lettres*, pp. 169 and 170.

² *Ibid.*, p. 170.

³ *Carnet*, work quoted, p. 283.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Journal Melegari*, p. 150.

⁶ *Souv. du baron de Barante*, II, p. 128.

⁷ *Lettres à Mme. R.*, p. 171.

⁸ *Journal Melegari*, p. 150.

⁹ Compare *Souv. du baron de Barante*, II, pp. 128-129.

¹⁰ *Journal Melegari*, p. 150.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 151. L. de Loménie, work quoted, p. 64.

It is certainly thus that Barante explains Constant's attitude. "He was," he declares, "without any conviction, without any faith in success, and without confidence in the supposed Liberal dispositions of the Emperor. He was playing carelessly, and often with gaiety, a game of chance. . . ."¹ This time Juliette was not responsible for his determinations. We must not imagine, as it has sometimes been thought, that he was called back to Paris by the imperious need of seeing this irritating friend again. In his *Carnet* he mentions her briefly several times : "Mme. Récamier in the midst of all that. . . Love in the midst of all that." After his disappointments with regard to the Hundred Days, he even adds ; "Hardness and indifference of Mme. Récamier during this species of persecution. My love persists. . . Intermittent intimacy. Confidence about Lucien (Bonaparte), about Auguste (de Stael), and about Prince Augustus of Prussia."² But, whatever he may say about it, his passion did not make him lose his head, and his decision to return was not the result of a fit of passion, but of a transport of the imagination, due to a caprice of his dillettantism and to the curiosity of his mind.

He continued seeing Mme. Récamier during the Hundred Days, whilst, as a direct collaborator with the Emperor and a State Councillor, he vainly endeavoured to defend himself against the contempt of his friends.³ Sismondi alone, or almost alone, took his part.⁴ Ought not Juliette to be admired for not disowning him under these circumstances and for continuing to receive him and to treat him well ? He persisted in writing her ardent letters⁵ begging for her pity, asking help from her against this "social proscription" of which he was the object. At the same time he noted in his *Journal intime* : "I have seen Juliette, but a State Councillor must give up gambling and love."⁶ Mme. Récamier herself was struggling with rather grave difficulties. Her husband

¹ *Souv. du baron de Barante*, II, p. 147.

² Sainte-Beuve, *Portr. litt.*, III, p. 283. Compare *Journal Melegari*, p. 151.

³ L. de Loménie, work quoted, p. 67.

⁴ Sainte-Beuve, *Nouveaux Lundis*, VI, p. 29.

⁵ *Lettres de Constant*, p. 171 and following.

⁶ *Journal Melegari*, p. 152.

was ruined for the second time.¹ She endeavoured not to let her worries be visible and to continue her *rôle* of conciliator in the society that had grouped itself around her. When Constant wanted to call Montlosier out for a lie that he had given him,² she tried in vain to stop the affair from going any further.³ Constant wounded Montlosier in the hand, and regretted that the injury was not more serious.⁴ He began to lose his head a little with all his State affairs, and was rather dazed by his own importance, so that when the Emperor started for the army, taking with him the destinies of France, Constant's romantic love affair was just about over.⁵

Mme. de Staél had left Paris as soon as the news of the landing of Bonaparte reached there.⁶ She had planned to go to Greece.⁷ The return from the Isle of Elba did not surprise her very much, and she summed up the general situation with an admirable surety of judgment: "It is all over with liberty if Bonaparte should triumph, and all over with national independence if he should be beaten."⁸ But she had not forgiven Benjamin his apostasy. She did not spare him in her letters, and must have seen with bitterness that she could not rouse in him either scruples or remorse. He notes in his *Journal intime*:⁹ "Letter received from Mme. de Staél. She would like me to do nothing for my fortune and to give her the little that I have (a charming combination!)."

When she was once more installed at Coppet, Mme. de Staél continued to entrust Mme. Récamier with her affairs in Paris. She requested that the Treasury should not refuse the promise of inscription that the Minister of the King had given her son. The debt to M. Necker had been declared a State debt by the Committee of liquidation, and Mme. de Staél hoped that the Emperor would admit this liquidation, as she was counting on it for a dowry for Albertine. Corinne's private fortune had been very much compromised by ten

¹ *Journal de Constant*, p. 154.

² *Journal Melegari*, p. 155.

⁴ *Journal Melegari*, p. 155.

⁶ *Journal intime de Constant*, edit. Melegari, p. 149.

⁷ See her letter to a friend in the *Staeliana* of Cousin d'Avallon, reproduced in the *Revue du Lyonnais*, new series, I, 2, p. 418.

⁸ A. Sorel, *Mme. de Staél*, p. 160.

³ *Lettres de Constant*, p. 177.

⁵ *Lettres à Mme. R.*, p. 178.

⁹ Edit. Melegari, p. 152.

years of exile. It was on Mme. Récamier that she depended chiefly for the success of her affair, for she did not intend to leave Coppet again.¹ In case the Emperor would accept this solution, Mme. de Staél undertook to disarm. "It is quite certain," she wrote, "that my gratitude would prevent my ever writing or doing anything that might injure him."²

Juliette, on the contrary, had not cared to leave Paris. She no doubt felt herself protected by the friendship of Queen Hortense, who, on the 23rd of March, 1815, wrote telling her to be reassured and to trust to her for caring for her interests.³ She continued her receptions during the Hundred Days. The Duc de Broglie tells us of a reading from *Adolphe* that took place at this time at Mme. Récamier's.⁴ There were about a dozen persons present, and the reading lasted nearly three hours. Mme. Récamier must have recognized herself in the personage of the obliging friend who is supposed to reconcile the two lovers and makes the breach greater.⁵ At the end of the evening Constant, weary and perhaps affected by all this, "burst into sobs." "The contagion," says the Duc de Broglie, "spread throughout the assembly, and she herself was deeply moved. Then suddenly, by a physiological revulsion, which according to the doctors is not a rare thing, the sobs, which had become convulsive, turned into bursts of nervous, uncontrollable laughter, so that if anyone had entered the room at that moment, and surprised the author and his audience, he would have been at a loss to have known what to think and to have explained the effect by the cause."

Events very speedily took a disastrous turn for Constant. The "Additional Act," when submitted to the popular vote, met with little opposition but with much indifference. Murat, for whom Constant had worked and who had returned to Napoleon, was beaten at Tolentino and driven from his

¹ Letter of the 31st of March, 1815, No. 204 of M. Ch. de Loménie's MSS.; a great part of this letter is published in *Coppet et Weimar*, p. 285 and following.

² Letter dated April 17th, 1815, No. 205 of M. Ch. de Loménie's MSS.; a fragment of it is published in *Coppet et Weimar*, p. 301.

³ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 279.

⁴ *Souv.*, p. 389 and following.

⁵ See the letter from Sismondi to Mme. d'Albany, October 14th, 1816, quoted by Sainte-Beuve, *Causeries du Lundi*, XI, p. 437.

kingdom of Naples. The Emperor himself, vanquished at Waterloo, abdicated a second time on the 22nd of June. Fouché was preparing the Second Restoration and, on the 4th of July, Paris was delivered over to the Allies. On the 8th, in the midst of circumstances that are well known, Louis XVIII brought back to Paris the white cockade. Constant must have made some bitter reflections within himself. He saw the Emperor, and was astonished at his force of resistance to misfortune. "The Emperor is back," he writes in his *Journal intime*.¹ "He sent for me. He is always calm and witty. He will abdicate to-morrow." A little farther on he writes: "I have paid another visit to the Emperor. He speaks of his situation with astonishing calmness and of his general position with the most perfect liberty of mind." As Fouché remained in the Ministry, Constant had nothing to fear with regard to his personal security. He began, however, without delay to compose an apologetic Memorial, "admirable," he says himself, "in moderation and nobility."² He was already thinking of soliciting a mandate as deputy.³ He kept Mme. Récamier informed with regard to his fresh agitations and intrigues.⁴ When everything was decided he wrote to her as follows: "As a few lines from me have sufficed for arranging my affair it must be that I am considered of some value. I can therefore enter your ranks again, which will only be mine because you are there. It is perhaps wrong, but there is no-one but you in the world for me. I therefore repeat that my fate is in your hands."⁵ The good services of Mme. Récamier were necessary to Constant in order that he might take up again the rank in society that his impatient vanity desired.⁶ He willingly owns in his

¹ Edit. Melegari, p. 156.

² *Journal Melegari*, p. 158.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ See his *Lettres*, from p. 190.

⁵ *Lettres*, p. 206.

⁶ The following letter from Constant, so picturesque and bitter at the same time, must, according to Th. Dufour, be placed in August, 1815. It is addressed to Mlle. Rosalie de Constant, and runs as follows: "It was for you, dear Rosalie, more than for anyone else that I sent the Memorial which was so useful to me. I am glad that you were pleased with it. As there is no longer any question of that affair I never think any more about it. . . . Mme. de St. has given up all her pretensions since my position is changed, and her letters became more friendly again as she saw that I was unfortunate. . . . If, as I hope, everything gradually gets more tranquil in France, we shall owe this solely to the wisdom of the King, and I do

*Journal*¹ that she proved herself a "good friend" to him. She intervened with Mme. de Luynes in his favour, and repeated to her own circle that they could not hold out against a man whom the King himself had forgiven.² She gave M. de Catellan one of those Memorials which Benjamin drew up on all occasions and which, with his facility, gave him no trouble.³ He could very truly write: "Heaven chose you for helping me through this terrible trial. You have accomplished your mission well. I hope that it is now finished. I shall never cease loving you and am as attached to you as a brother."⁴ On the 31st of October, 1815, Constant started for England through Brussels.⁵

The Second Restoration was to bring Mme. Récamier at last a little of that calm which she had sought in vain ever since the hard days of her exile. Her sentiments, which made her shun the Bonapartists, the ultra-Royalists, and made her dread, too, the hostility of the thorough Liberals for the Bourbons, inclined her towards the moderate Royalists, whose ambition was to conciliate legitimism and liberty. She must, like her friends, have rejoiced at the proclamation of Cambrai and have promised herself some tranquillity at last.

She saw Prince Augustus again, who had come to Paris with the allied armies, in command of the Prussian artillery.⁶ On his way thither, during the siege of Maubeuge, Landrecies, Philippeville, Givet, and Longwy, he had written her a whole series of passionate letters.⁷ "All Mme. Récamier's friendship

not expect then that I shall leave Paris. My wife will bring my work from Germany and I shall publish part of it this winter. I am not yet living in my house, which fortunately I had not furnished. An English Commissariat took up its abode in it and left me for rent the manure of fifty horses, which has its value. I hope, though, to let it in a different way next time."—Unpublished letter, Public Library, Geneva, McC. 36b.

¹ Edit. Melegari, p. 158.

² *Lettres de Constant*, p. 210. ³ *Lettres*, p. 212. ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 227.

⁵ *Carnet in Sainte-Beuve. Portr. litt.*, III, p. 283.

⁶ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 147 and following. Compare Degérando, *Lettres inédites*, p. 17.

⁷ On the 8th of July, 1815, Prince Augustus wrote as follows to Mme. Récamier: "Headquarters Réquigni, near Maubeuge. . . . Glorious events for Prussia will perhaps soon give me the opportunity of approaching you and of entering Paris as soon as peace is made. I am in command of the 2nd Prussian corps and the Allied German troops, which are ordered to besiege or invest nine fortresses situated between the Meuse and the Sambre. To-night I am cutting the trenches in front of Maubeuge, and

for her faithful and generous adorer did not suffice," says Mme. Lenormant, "to make her forgive the incredible gallantry with which he laid at the feet of the person who certainly was the most thoroughly penetrated with national feeling all the French fortresses!"

Juliette, through her intercourse with Constant, had also been led into seeing very frequently the Baronne de

in eighteen or twenty days I shall be master of it, even if the Commander should make the most stubborn resistance. The hope of seeing you sooner will be a powerful motive for me to accelerate the siege." On the 20th of July, 1815, he writes: "Headquarters Maroilles, facing Landrécy. A siege of two days, commenced where one generally finishes, has sufficed to make me master of this important place (Landrecies). As we are not making war with France, but only with Bonaparte and his accomplices, I hope you will share the joy of the Prussians whom I have the honour of commanding." On the 29th of July, 1815: "Headquarters Saureille, near Philippeville. I am eagerly profiting by the taking of Marienbourg to write to you. After having opened fire first at 300 paces from the place and after bombarding it for eight hours, I compelled the Commander to yield. I ought to complain of you, dear Juliette, for treating me quite like an enemy." On the 9th of August, 1815: "Headquarters Saureille, near Philippeville. As you have not even deigned to reply to my last letter, I see that I am included in the war you are making on the poor Prussians. As the Great Powers, however, seem disposed to make peace, I hope you will follow their example." On the 10th of September, 1815: "Headquarters of Romedenne (?) near Givet. Your letter of the 16th of August ought to make me believe that you wish to break off entirely an intercourse which appears to have no more interest for you. For fear of increasing your hatred of the Prussians, I only mention the taking of the two fortresses of Givet and of Mont d'Haure, merely to assure you that I let an opportunity of winning glory escape me in order to spare a French town." These few quotations prove how unjust it is to write as J. Turquan has done in his book on Mme. Récamier, speaking of the successes of Augustus of Prussia: "The Prince talkod to her as he might have talked to a Prussian woman. Mme. Récamier did not insist on his silence as she ought to have done. Mme. Récamier does not appear to have been very sensitive as regards French patriotism. In face of these intoxicating vanities there was no longer any *patrie* for the poor woman" (pp. 141, 142, 143). It would be difficult to accumulate more stupidities in less words. The fragments we have quoted have, with one exception, not been published (compare *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 148), and are taken from the letters of Prince Augustus to Mme. Récamier in M. Ch. de Loméni's collection. Another letter might also be compared. It has never been published, and is only dated April 1st, Berlin. In this letter Prince Augustus says: "The good hopes you had of a national movement have been cruelly deceived, for up to the present not the slightest resistance has been made, and I know how such conduct must pain you. But all Europe is already in arms, and numerous armies commanded by Wellington, Blücher, and Schwartzenberg are advancing towards the French frontiers, and the national spirit now reigning in Prussia is all that could be desired" (No. 70 of the collection). The patriotism of Mme. de Staél in 1815 could not be doubted either, and M. P. Gautier in his work, *Mme. de Staél et Napoléon*, Chapter XXIII, shows clearly the advances she made to Napoleon in his misfortune.

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Krûdener, a woman ten years older than she was who, after going through Germany preaching the regeneration of Christianity, had come to Paris. Her interviews with the Czar had given her great notoriety. Sainte-Beuve has twice given us a portrait of Mme. de Krûdener with slightly varied touches.¹ He shows her, in 1815, exercising in Paris beyond and outside her political action, a religious action which was, however, fleeting, and scattering around her "the perfumes of her rich soul."² Many scoffers in Paris, who went to hear her in her large *salon* of the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, which was open to all, came away, if not convinced at least charmed and penetrated by her. Chateaubriand is less indulgent for Mme. de Krûdener, her "politico-religious conversations," and her "celestial witchcraft." Constant met her at Mme. Récamier's in 1814, when he was at the height of his love-frenzy. She promised him consolation,³ tried to touch Juliette's heart, and wrote a little work on this delicate situation which Constant read in manuscript and with which he declared he was deeply touched. According to Constant's own confession, Mme. Récamier consented to pray under the guidance of Mme. de Krûdener, but this attempt at spiritual union did not last long. Mme. Récamier was none the less on excellent terms with the mystic baroness, who, after leaving Paris, wrote to beg Juliette to be faithful to the grace of God, to persevere in the pursuit of divine love, and also to be kind to "poor Benjamin."⁴

Constant's passion had not withheld the complications of so agitated a time. Mme. Récamier could from thenceforth be tranquil as far as that was concerned. She had another keen sorrow in this year 1815. After the Battle of Tolentino, which Murat lost on the 2nd of May, he was succeeded on the throne by Ferdinand IV. With a few partisans who had gathered round him in the South of France he attempted to regain his crown. A storm separated him from the greater part of his forces and, cast on the shore at Pizzo, in

¹ *Portr. de femmes*, p. 382 and following; *Portr. lit.*, III, p. 284 and following.

² *Ibid.*, p. 405.

³ *M. O. T.*, Biré's edition, IV, p. 459.

⁴ See this letter in *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 288 and following. See also *C. L. A. R.*, No. 67.

Calabria, he was taken by Ferdinand's men, tried before a court-martial and, as is well-known, shot on the 13th of October, 1815. Chateaubriand tells of this tragic end in a few fine pages of his *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe*.¹ Mme. Récamier had remained on intimate terms with Murat. On the 6th of June he had written to ask her about the state of opinion and about the army,² and on the 18th of the same month he had again written to her.³ "I lost my throne and family without being disturbed," he says, "but ingratitude is revolting. . . . Give me your advice, I shall await your reply, the Duc d'Otrante's and Lucien's before making a decision." She was therefore very closely connected with the drama which terminated the extraordinary destiny of King Joachim. She was doubtless very much affected by it, and she kept up with Mme. Murat, whom she was to see again later on at Trieste, a close and faithful friendship.⁴ For many years she had not been spared emotions of various kinds, and at least they left her that sentiment of fidelity to misfortune which is one of the most touching traits in her character.

¹ Biré's edition, IV, p. 441 and following.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 446 and 447.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 447 and 448.

⁴ *Souv. et Corr.*, I, p. 283.

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